

THE
OUTLAW OF ICELAND

A Romance.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

VICTOR HUGO

BY

SIR GILBERT CAMPBELL.

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THE OUTLAW OF ICELAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEAD-HOUSE AT DRONTHEIM.

“AND that, neighbour Niels, is where love leads to. That poor girl, Guth Sterson, would not be stretched out, with a black stone for her couch, like a star-fish forgotten by the tide, if she had thought of nothing else but looking after her father’s boat or mending his nets. May Saint Usuph the fisherman console our old comrade in his hour of affliction.”

“And her betrothed,” was the reply, uttered in a sharp, quavering voice, “Gill Stadt, that handsome young man by her side, he would have been alive and well if, instead of falling in love with Guth and going to seek for fortune in the mines of Røeraas, he had stayed at home, and rocked the cradle of his young brother as it hung from the smoky rafters of his mother’s cottage.”

“Your memory grows weak as you get older, Mother Olly,” interrupted neighbour Niels, to whom the first observation had been addressed. “Gill never had a brother, and it is that, which deepens the grief of the poor widow Stadt, for her cottage is now a solitude, and if she casts her eyes upwards for consolation, she finds between heaven and them the roof of her cottage, from which hangs the empty cradle of her child, who now lies dead in the flower of his youth.”

"Poor mother," said Mother Olly; "but as for the young man, he has only himself to blame. Why did he engage in the mines of Røraas?"

"I believe," muttered Niels, "that those infernal mines take a human life for every ascalin of copper that they yield."

"Miners are madmen," said the fisherman who had first spoken. "If a fish wants to live he does not quit the water, and a man who sets any value upon his life should not dive into the bowels of the earth."

"But," objected a young man who formed one of the crowd, "was it not necessary for Gill Stadt to work in the mines to procure the money for his marriage?"

"We should never expose our lives," said Mother Olly sententiously, "for anything that is not of equal value. A fine marriage dowry has Gill gained for his Guth!"

"Did the young girl drown herself in her despair at hearing of the death of her betrothed?" asked one of the loungers.

"What are you asking?" cried the rough voice of a soldier, who was pushing his way through the crowd. "I knew the girl well, and she *was* betrothed to a young miner who was crushed to death by the fall of a rock in one of the subterranean galleries of Storwaadsgrube, near Røraas; but she was also the mistress of one of my comrades, and it was in going to see him on the sly at Munkholm, to tell him of the death of the man she was engaged to, that her boat struck on a sunken rock and she was drowned."

A confused hubbub of voices rose at once at this statement.

"Impossible, brave soldier!" cried the old women.

The younger ones remained silent, whilst neighbour Niels maliciously quoted the remark of the fisherman, "And that is where love leads to." The soldier

became seriously angry at the incredulity of the old women. He had already called them "a parcel of old witches from the Cave of Quiragoth," and they were commencing to resent so gross an insult, when a sharp and commanding voice uttered the words: "Silence, silence, you old dotards!" and all became silent, as the crowing of the cock causes the clucking of the hens to cease. Before continuing to describe the remainder of the scene, it would perhaps be as well to endeavour to give some idea of the appearance of the place in which it occurred.

It was, as the reader has, no doubt, already guessed, one of those melancholy buildings which public care and social forethought have erected for the reception of corpses, the last asylum of those dead who have for the most part lived an unhappy life, and to which sad asylum crowd those who are moved by simple curiosity, as well as others who are inspired by morbid, or by kindly feelings, whilst often the friends of the deceased, or their weeping relations, to whom a long period of suspense has left but a faint hope, come hither to see if their worst forebodings have been realised. In the times long past in which the scene of this story is laid, and in the only partially civilised country to which I have transported my readers, the idea had not yet occurred to the minds of the authorities, as it has in our cities of mud and gold, to make these places a receptacle for monuments, ingeniously solemn, and elegantly funereal.

The light did not fall through a window of grand proportions, placed in the ceiling of an, artistically sculptured vault, upon a series of couches on which some of the luxuries of the living seemed to have been accorded to the dead, and where the very pillow appeared to yield to the pressure of the lifeless head.

If the door of the guardian of the chamber was left

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half-opened, the eye, wearied with the sight of nude and hideous corpses, could not, as it does now, repose itself by the sight of smiling children and tasteful furniture. Death was there in all its hideousness—in all its horror, for they had not then essayed to deck the fleshless skeleton with bows and ribbons.

The hall, in which the conversation that we have repeated took place, was large, and so gloomy that it gave the idea of having greater extent than it really possessed. The only light that it received was from the low square entrance door, and from an orifice rudely pierced in the ceiling, through which a feeble and melancholy light fell, together with the rain, hail, or snow, according to the season of the year, upon the corpses which were stretched immediately beneath it.

An iron balustrade ran across the hall, dividing it into two portions. The outer of these was entered by the square door, whilst in the inner were six long slabs of black granite with the feet pointing towards the railing and arranged parallel to each other.

In each division there was a side door which served as entrances for the guardian and his assistant, whose quarters were situated in the rear of the building which ran backwards towards the sea.

The miner and his betrothed occupied two of these granite beds.

In the body of the young girl decomposition had already commenced, and its presence was announced by the large blue and purple spots which covered her limbs.

The features of Gill were harsh and rigid, but his body was so terribly mutilated that it was impossible to discover if he had been as handsome as Mother Ollie seemed to have asserted.

It was before these disfigured relics of mortality that

the conversation had taken place which we have just reported.

An old man, very tall and thin, was seated upon a broken stool in one of the darkest corners of the hall; his arms were folded and his head bent down, and he seemed to have paid little attention to what was going on around him, until the moment when he rose up suddenly, and crying, "Silence, dotards, silence!" seized the soldier by the arm. All became silent.

The soldier turned round, and burst into a rude shout of laughter at the sight of the person who had so suddenly attracted his attention, and whose pale face, scanty hair, and long fingers, together with his complete suit of reindeer leather, fully warranted the exercise of the risible faculties.

A murmur rose from amongst the crowd of women who had for a moment remained silent:

"It is the guardian of the Spladgest" (deadhouse). "The accursed porter of the dead." "The diabolical Spiagudry." "The wicked sorcerer."

"Peace, you old fools, peace! if to-day is your devil's Sabbath, hasten and get your broom-sticks, otherwise they will fly away without you, and leave in peace this valiant descendant of the God Thor."

Then, Spiagudry, endeavouring to twist his countenance into a gracious smile, addressed the soldier:

"You say, my brave fellow, that this wretched woman——"

"The old wretch," muttered Mother Olly. "He calls us wretched women because when we have the misfortune to fall into his clutches, he only gets for his fee thirty ascalins, whilst the miserable carcase of a man brings him in forty."

"Silence, old hags," repeated Spiagudry. "In truth, these daughters of Satan are like their own kettles, when they begin to boil over they commence

to sing. Tell me, my king of swords, will your comrade, of whom this Guth was so enamoured, kill himself in despair at her loss?"

Here the long-repressed explosion burst forth.

"Do you hear the miscreant? listen to the old heathen!" cried twenty voices at the same moment in their sharp and discordant tones. "He wishes for another dead body for the sake of the forty ascalins."

"Well, and should that be the case," retorted the guardian of the Spladgest, "does not our Gracious King Christiern V., whom may Saint Hospice protect declare himself the born protector of all the miners in the kingdom, even to helping himself to the miserable property that they may possess when they die?"

"You do great honour to his Majesty," replied Braal the fisherman, "to compare the royal treasury to the strongbox of your charnel house, and yourself to him, neighbour Spiagudry."

"Neighbour, indeed," sneered the guardian, disgusted at the familiarity of the address. "Your neighbour, forsooth; say rather your host. Some day, my dear citizen of the sea, I'll offer you one of my stone beds for a six days' visit. Besides," he continued, "if I alluded to the death of this soldier, it was to see if suicide on account of the passions inspired by these ladies was to become a regular custom."

"Well, Mr. Guardian of Corpses, looking like a corpse yourself, what is it that you want with that amiable expression of countenance, that looks like a laugh on the face of a dying man?"

"You are facetious, gallant sir," responded Spiagudry. "I have ever thought that there was more wit under the helmet of the musketeer Thurn, who defeated Satan both with sabre and tongue, than under the mitre of Bishop Isleif, who wrote the History of

Iceland, or the college-cap of Professor Schœnning, who has so well described our cathedral."

"In that case, take my advice, old Leathercoat, abandon the emoluments of your charnel-house, and betake yourself to the Museum of the Viceroy of Berghen, for I swear to you, by Saint Belphegor, that they pay almost their weight in gold for curious beasts. But tell me, what do you want with me?"

"When bodies are brought to us that have been fished out of the water, we are obliged to give half our fee to the fishermen. I therefore wished, noble heir of the musketer Thurn, to ask you to urge upon your unhappy comrade not to drown himself, but to choose some other form of death, for the method must be a matter of indifference to him, and I am sure that he would not wish to wrong the humble individual who will receive his body, should the loss of Guth impel him to commit a rash act."

"But you deceive yourself, most charitable and hospitable guardian of the dead; my comrade will not have the satisfaction of being received into your charming six-bedded chamber; for, believe me, he has ere now consoled himself for his loss, and some time ago he was thoroughly wearied of Guth!"

At these words the storm, which Spiagudry had for the time drawn upon himself, burst with redoubled violence upon the head of the soldier.

"Is it thus, you scoundrel!" shrieked the old women, "that we are forgotten; a nice thing it is to love such villains."

But the young women still kept silence; some of them even ventured to think that the devil-me-care soldier had a fair share of good looks.

"Ho, ho!" cried he, "is the witches' Sabbath commencing again. The punishment of Belzebuth

must be terrible if he is condemned to listen to such choruses even once in a week."

What would have been the result of this closing buffoonery will never be known, for the attention of all became entirely absorbed by a rumour which began to be circulated, and soon a band of half-naked urchins were seen howling and jumping round a curtained litter which two men bore through the door of the mortuary.

"Whence do you come?" asked the guardian, of the bearers.

"From the sands of Urchtal."

"Oglypiglap!" cried Spiagudry.

One of the side doors opened, and a little man of the race of Lapps, entirely dressed in leather, showed himself, and made a sign to the bearers of the litter to follow him.

Spiagudry accompanied them, and the door was closed, before the curious crowd had been able to guess by the length of the corpse whether the last guest of the dead-house was male or female.

They were still discussing the question, when Spiagudry and his assistant reappeared, carrying between them the corpse of a man, which they deposited upon one of the granite slabs.

"It is a long time since such fine clothes as these have passed through my hands," said Oglypiglap, as standing on the tips of his toes, he hung on the wall above the dead man the elegant uniform of a captain of musketeers.

The head of the body was terribly mutilated, and the limbs were covered with blood, which Spiagudry endeavoured to wash off by copious streams from a broken bucket.

"By Saint Balzebuth!" cried the soldier, "it is an officer of my regiment; let me see. Who can it be?"

Can it be Captain Bollar who has killed himself from grief at losing his uncle?—Tah, why he was his heir!—the Baron Randmer, who to-day will risk his estate in a cast of the dice, and who to-morrow may win his opponent's house and land? No, it is not him. Can it be Captain Lorey, whose dog was drowned, or Paymaster Sturck, whose wife is so much talked about?—but I don't see why he should blow out his brains for that."

The crowd increased every moment.

Just then a young man was passing along the quay; and seeing the crowd about the door of the Spladgest, dismounted from his horse, and throwing the reins to his groom, entered the mortuary.

He was dressed in a plain travelling costume, armed with a sabre, and enveloped in a large green cloak, a plume of black feathers fastened to his hat by a diamond buckle hung over his handsome features, and mingled with his long chestnut curls, whilst his boots and spurs, thickly encrusted with mud, showed that he had come from a long distance.

Just as he entered, a little thick-set man, also wrapped in a cloak, and whose hands were covered with enormous gloves, had remarked to the soldier.

"And who says that he has committed suicide? That man has no more killed himself than the roof of your cathedral set itself on fire."

As a double-edged weapon inflicts two wounds, so this speech produced two replies.

"Our cathedral," said Niels, "will not be burned again. They are covering the roof with copper. It was that villain Han, they say, who set it on fire, to give work to the miners, amongst whom his favourite, Gill Stadt, was working."

"The devil!" cried the soldier, in his turn. "Do you presume to tell me, the second musketeer of the

regiment of Munkholm, that that man has not blown out his brains?"

"The man has been murdered," replied the little man coldly.

"Listen to the oracle! Why, your eyes must be as much covered up as your fingers are with those great gloves of yours, which you wear in spite of the spring weather."

An angry glance shot from the eyes of the little man.

"These fingers could easily teach you the use of powder, of which you seem to know nothing."

"Come out and try, then," cried the soldier, boiling over with rage; then, checking himself, he added: "But this is not the time or place to speak of duels; we are in the presence of the dead."

The little man muttered some words in an unknown tongue, and disappeared amongst the crowd.

Then a voice was heard saying: "The body was found on the sands of Urchtal."

"On the sands of Urchtal," repeated the soldier. "Captain Dispolsen was to have disembarked there this morning on his return from Copenhagen."

"Captain Dispolsen has not yet arrived at Munkholm," said another voice.

"They say that Han of Iceland is in the habit of haunting that coast," remarked a fourth.

"In that case," remarked the soldier, "very likely this body is that of the captain, and if Han is the murderer, it would account for all the appearances, for he often murders in so diabolically cunning a manner that his victims are frequently supposed to have made away with themselves."

"What sort of a man is Han?" asked someone.

"He is a giant," answered one.

"No, a dwarf," contended another.

"No one has ever seen him," cried a third.

"Those who see him for the first time, see him for the last also."

"Silence!" cried Mother Olly. There are, they say, only three persons who have ever exchanged a word with him—that wicked Spiagudry, the Widow Stadt, and (alas! he has had an unhappy life and a terrible death) Gill Stadt there. So, silence!"

"Silence!" repeated all.

"Now I am sure," exclaimed the soldier suddenly, "that this is Captain Dispolsen. I perfectly recognise the steel chain that our prisoner, old Schumacher, gave him on his departure."

The young man with the black plume broke the silence abruptly:

"You are sure that it is Captain Dispolsen?"

"Certain, by all the good qualities of Saint Belzebuth," was the reply.

The young man at once left the mortuary.

"Call a boat, I must go to Munkholm," said he to his servant.

"But, my lord, the general——"

"You will take the horses to him; I will be there to-morrow. Am 'I my own master or not? Go, the day is drawing to a close, and I am in haste. Get a boat."

The servant obeyed, and for a long time followed his young master with his eyes, as the boat drew further and further from the bank.

CHAPTER II.

THE CASTLE OF MUNKHOLM.

THE reader is already aware that the opening scene of this story is laid in Drontheim, one of the four principal cities of Norway, although it was not a vice-regal residence.

At this period (1699) the kingdom of Norway was still united to that of Denmark, and was governed by a viceroy, whose seat of government was at Berghen, a city situated further south, and much more beautiful than Drontheim.

The appearance of Drontheim is picturesque when approached from the gulf which derives its name from the city. The harbour is of some extent, though vessels cannot enter it with ease at all times of the tide, and has something the appearance of a large canal. On the right is the anchorage for the Swedish and Danish vessels, and on the left for the foreign ships, according to the regulations laid down by the port rules.

The city is situated in the midst of a well-cultivated plain, dominated by the slender turrets of the cathedral.

This church, one of the finest specimens of Gothic architecture, as we may learn from the works of Professor Schenning (so learnedly quoted by Spangud), who described it before it had been destroyed by repeated fires, bore upon its principal spire the epis-

copal cross, the distinctive sign that it was in the see of the Lutheran Bishop of Drontheim.

Far beyond the city, and cutting the blue horizon, could be seen the white peaks of the mountains of Kole, looking like the ornaments of an ancient crown.

In the midst of the harbour, about a cannon-shot from the shore, rose the fortress of Munkholm, built upon a mass of wave-beaten rocks—a gloomy prison which held within its walls a captive celebrated for his long career of prosperity and his rapid downfall.

Schumacher, born in comparative obscurity, had been overwhelmed with favours by his royal master. Then, hurled from the position of Grand Chancellor of Norway and Denmark to the criminal bar, he was condemned to the scaffold, but receiving a reprieve at the last moment, he was cast into a dungeon situated in a castle at the further extremity of the two kingdoms.

His own favourites had conspired to overthrow him, nor was he able to complain of their ingratitude, for the high positions in which he had placed them had merely been meant as stepping stones by which he might attain to an even loftier position for himself.

He, who had almost created the nobility of Denmark, could perceive from his place of exile, those whom he had raised to such high positions dividing between themselves his rank and honours.

The Count d'Ahlefeld, his avowed enemy, had succeeded to the post of Grand Chancellor; General Arensdorf, as Grand Marshal, had all the military patronage in his hands; whilst Bishop Spollyson had obtained the post of Inspector of the Universities, a position of great dignity and emolument.

The sole one of his enemies who did not owe his position to him was Count Ulric Frederic Guldenlew, Viceroy of Norway, a natural son of Frederic III., and.

the count had always shown him great consideration since his downfall.

It was towards the rocks upon which the Castle of Munkholm stood that the boat in which the young man with the black plumes had embarked was slowly advancing.

The sun was sinking rapidly behind the solitary fort, and its rays had become so horizontal that the peasant on the far-away hills of Larsynn could see the shadow of the sentinel on the turrets of Munkholm cast upon the heather behind him.



CHAPTER III.

AN OFFICER OF THE PERIOD.

“**A**NDREW, order the curfew to be tolled in half-an-hour. Let Sorsyll relieve Duckness at the main portcullis, and let Malelivius mount guard on the summit of the round turret. Keep good watch and ward on the side of the Tower of the Lion of Sleswig. Do not forget at seven o'clock to have the gun fired to give the signal that the chain may be drawn across the mouth of the harbour—but stay, we must wait for the arrival of Captain Dispolsen; it will, I think, be necessary to light the beacon, and to see if that of Walderhog is also illuminated according to the orders we gave yesterday; above all, let refreshments be prepared for the captain, and offered to him upon his arrival, and—I was almost forgetting—mark the name of Toric Belfast, the second musketeer of the Regiment of Munkholm, for two days' confinement in the cells; he has been absent from barracks all the day.”

It was a sergeant of the Munkholm Regiment who issued these orders, standing under the gloomy arch of the guard-house, which was situated in the low tower that protected the principal entrance to the castle.

The soldiers to whom he addressed these orders rose to see that they were carried out.

At that instant the measured stroke of oars was heard outside.

"There is Captain Dispelsen, no doubt," remarked the sergeant, looking through the little grated window from which a view of the gulph could be obtained.

A boat was rowed close up to the iron-bound door.

"Who comes there?" cried the sergeant.

"Open," was the reply. "Peace and safety."

"No one comes in here. Have you an order of admittance?"

"Yes."

"I will soon see that, and if you have lied, by my patron saint, you shall try how the water of the gulph tastes."

A light gleamed behind the door, the rusty bolts creaked, the bars were raised, the door flew open, and the sergeant examined the parchment that was presented to him by the new comer.

"Pass," said he, "it is all correct. Stay, however, a moment, and leave behind you the buckle of your hat; no one, according to the royal edict, enters the prison with jewellery, with the exception of the king, the viceroy, and the members of his family, the bishop, and the officers of the garrison, and you do not come under any of these heads."

Without a word the young man unfastened the forbidden jewel, and tossed it as payment to the fisherman who had rowed him across, who, as soon as he recognised the value of the gift, took to his oars, lest his passenger should repent of such a piece of prodigal generosity.

Whilst the sergeant, murmuring at the imprudence of the Chancellor in lavishing such orders as the stranger had just exhibited, and occupied himself in securely refastening the door, the young man, throwing his cloak over his shoulder, passed through the dark arch of the guard-house across the wide parade, through the artillery quarters, where some old dis-

mounted culverins (still to be seen in the Museum at Copenhagen) were lying, until he reached the main portcullis, which was raised for him, after his permit had been again scrutinised.

Then, followed by a soldier, he crossed, without hesitation and as one acquainted with the locality, one of the four squares which surround the great circular court, in the midst of which is the vast rock upon which stands the tower called the Lion of Sleswig, which derives its name from its having been the place of imprisonment selected by Rolf the Dwarf for his brother Coaltrain, the Lion Duke of Sleswig or Sleswich.

It is not my intention here to give a full account of the Tower of Munkholm, the more so because were the reader to be confined in a state prison, he might fancy that he would have the enjoyment of a large garden. In this he would be wrong, though the Tower of the Lion of Sleswig, destined as it was for prisoners of the highest distinction, gave them, amongst other privileges, that of walking in a kind of wilderness where some holly bushes, old yew trees, and a few sombre pines grew in the crevices of the rocks in an open space surrounded by lofty walls and massive towers.

Arriving at the foot of this rock, the young man ascended some steps roughly cut in the stone, until he reached the foot of one of the numerous towers surrounding the enclosure, in which was placed a postern gate. He then sounded a note upon a copper horn, which had been handed to him by one of the sentries at the portcullis.

"Open the door quickly," cried a voice gaily. "It is no doubt this infernal captain."

As the door swung back the new-comer saw in a feebly lighted gothic hall a young officer lazily

lounging upon a heap of mantles and reindeer skins, having near him one of those lamps with three burners, which our forefathers were in the habit of hanging from the ceiling, but which was now placed upon the ground.

The elegance of his uniform, and the air of foppery with which he was dressed contrasted with the nakedness of the hall, and the clumsy make of the scanty furniture. He was reading, but turned half round to greet his visitor.

"It is the captain. Welcome, captain, you did not know that you were keeping a man waiting that you had never set eyes on, but never mind, our acquaintance shall be soon made. Let me begin then by condoling with you on your return to this ancient castle. If I remain here much longer, I shall become as gay as an owl nailed on a door to frighten away his brothers and sisters, and when I return to Copenhagen for the nuptials of my sister, I do not believe one woman in a hundred will recognise me. But tell me, are knots of rose coloured ribbons at the bottom of the breeches still the fashion? And have they translated any more of the romances of that French lady, Mademoiselle de Scudéry? I pin my faith upon her *Clélie*. I suppose that they still read it in Copenhagen? It is my handbook of love, now that I sigh, removed from so many attractive eyes, for as for the eyes of our young prisoner—you understand to whom I allude—they never respond to mine for a moment. Ah, if it were not for the orders of my father but I must tell you in confidence, captain, that my father, don't mention it again, has urged me to— Well, you understand. Schumacher's daughter, in short; but I lose my time, that pretty statue has nothing of the woman in her, she does little but weep, and never casts a glance at me."

The young man had not been able to edge in a word owing to the extreme volubility of the officer, but now he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What do you say? Urged to seduce Schumacher's daughter."

"Seduce! Oh, is that what they call it now in Copenhagen? But I defy the devil to succeed here; being on guard the day before yesterday, I put on, expressly for her, you understand, a new ruff, which came direct from Paris. Would you believe it, she never cast a look at me, though I passed through the room in which she was three or four times, making the rowels of my new spurs, which are as large as a Lombardy ducat (that is the fashion, is it not?) jingle on the floor!"

"Just Heaven!" cried the young man, striking his forehead, "but this is too awful."

"Is it not?" answered the officer, misapprehending the exclamation. "Not the slightest attention to me. It is strange, but true for all that."

The young man paced up and down the hall, violently agitated.

"Will you take some refreshment, Captain Dispolsen?" asked the officer.

The young man recovered his self-possession.

"I am not Captain Dispolsen," said he.

"What!" exclaimed the officer, rising from his couch, and speaking in a severe tone; "Who are you then that has dared to introduce himself here in this manner?"

The stranger produced his order. "I wish to see the Count Griffenfeld—that is to say, your prisoner."

"The count, the count," muttered the officer, with an air of suspicion; "but, after all, this order is correct, for no one can deny that this is the signature of the Vice-Chancellor Grummarde de Knud. The bearer can

visit at any hour or season the state prisons in the royal dominions.' Grummarde de Knud is the brother of the old general Levin de Knud, who commands at Drontheim. And you know that he has had the education of my future brother-in-law entrusted to him?"

"Thanks for your morsel of family history, lieutenant; but do you not think that you have said enough?"

"The impertinent fellow is right," said the lieutenant to himself, biting his lips, then he exclaimed aloud: "Usher, usher, conduct this stranger to Schumacher, and do not grumble if I have unhooked your lamp with its three beaks, which dates without doubt from the time of Sciold the Pagan, or of Havar the Cloven."

He uttered this string of words, as the stranger and his guide passed across the deserted garden of the tower; and then the martyr to fashion threw himself once more upon his couch, and began again to follow the thread of the amorous adventures of Clélie the Amazon and Horatius with the One Eye.



CHAPTER IV.

GENERAL LEVIN DE KNUD

A GROOM leading two horses entered the courtyard of the palace belonging to the Governor of Drontheim, and was making his way to the stables, when he felt himself seized roughly by the arm, whilst a voice exclaimed:

"How, Poel! you here by yourself?—and your master—where is your master?"

It was the old General Levin de Knud who addressed him, for having from his window perceived the groom leading the riderless horses, he had hurried down the grand staircase, and seizing the man by the arm, gazed uneasily into his face as he put the question.

"Your Excellency," replied Poel, bowing profoundly, "my master is no longer in Drontheim."

"What! Was he here, then, and has he left without coming to see his old friend, without giving me one embrace? When did he leave?"

"He arrived this evening, and he left almost as soon as he had arrived."

"This evening—this evening! But where did he stop, and where has he gone to?"

"He dismounted at the Spladgest, and he has gone to Munkholm."

"Ah, I am relieved! I thought from your manner that he had gone to the other end of the world. But

what is he doing at Munkholm? What was he doing at the Spladgest? What a regular knight errant he is! But after all, the fault is partially mine. I wished that, in spite of his rank, he should have perfect freedom——”

“And so he is not the slave of etiquette,” answered Poel.

“No, but he is the slave of his whims. But no doubt he will soon return. Go, Poel, and take some refreshment. But, tell me, have you done a great deal of wandering?”

“General, we have come direct from Berghen. My master seemed sad.”

“Sad! What had taken place between his father and himself? Was he annoyed at the proposed marriage?”

“I do not know, but the report was that His Serenity insisted on it.”

“Insisted on it! But to insist there must have been opposition. Ordener must have refused to comply with his father’s wishes.”

“I am ignorant of what has taken place, your Excellency, but he seemed sad.”

“Sad! Do you know what sort of reception his father gave him?”

“The first time they met was in the camp near Berghen. His Serene Highness said, ‘I do not see you often, my son.’

“‘The better for me, my lord and father,’ answered my master, and then he proceeded to give an account of his travels in the north, and His Serene Highness said, ‘It is well.’

“The next day my master returned from a visit to the palace, and said, ‘They wish me to marry, but I must first see my second father, General Levin de Knud.’ I saddled the horses and we came here.”

"Was it true, Poel," asked the old general, with a slight tremour in his voice, "that he called me his second father?"

"Yes, your excellency."

"May misfortune overtake me if I lend any assistance to this projected marriage if I find that it is against his inclination. I would sooner incur disgrace at the hands of my royal master—but after all she is the daughter of the Grand Chancellor of the two kingdoms. By the way, Poel, does Ordener know that his future mother-in-law the Countess d'Ahlefeld has been here incognito since yesterday, and that the count is expected?"

"I do not know, general."

"I think that he must know it," murmured the old governor, "else why did he beat a retreat directly he arrived?"

Then the general with a kindly wave of the hand towards Poel, and saluting the sentinel who had stood with presented arms, during the conversation, retired into the palace, with his mind as ill at ease as when he emerged from it.



CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

AFTER passing through many vaulted passages, and ascending several spiral staircases, the usher threw open the door of a room, and the first words which greeted the ears of the stranger were—

“Is it Captain Dispolsen at last?”

This question was put by an aged man, seated with his back to the door, with his elbows resting upon a writing table, and his face buried in his hands. He was wrapped in a dressing robe of black wool.

Over a bed at the further end of the room hung a shattered shield, over which were suspended the broken collars of the orders of the Elephant and the Dannebrog, whilst below the shield was fixed the coronet of a count reversed, whilst the fragments of hands of justice bound together in the form of a cross, completed this extraordinary display.

The old man was the celebrated Schumacher,

“No, sir,” replied the usher, “it is not Captain Dispolsen.” Then, turning to the stranger, he added, “This is the prisoner,” and leaving them together he closed the door, though the old man exclaimed in a querulous voice—

“If it is not the captain, I do not desire to see any one.”

At these words the stranger remained standing near the door, whilst the prisoner, thinking that he was

again alone, for he had not moved from his position, relapsed once more into his melancholy reverie.

All at once he burst forth—

“The captain has certainly abandoned or betrayed me. O, men! men are like the icicle which the Arab took for a diamond and stored away in his pouch, but when he sought for it, nothing remained but a drop of water.”

“I am not one of those men,” said the stranger.

Schumacher rose up impatiently.

“Who is here listening to me—is it some miserable tool of Guldenlew’s?”

“Do not speak ill of the Viceroy, my lord count.”

“My lord count! is it to flatter me that you revive a lost title; your trouble is vain, I am no longer in power.”

“He who speaks did not know you in your days of power, but he is no less your friend.”

“That is because he still believes that my star may rise again; the remembrances of those whom present misfortune has overwhelmed, are always measured by the hopes of a prosperous future.”

“It is I who ought to complain, noble count, for I have recollected you, whilst you have forgotten me. I am Ordener.”

A flash of pleasure gleamed in the old man’s eyes, and an irrepressible smile of pleasure passed over his mouth, half hidden by his white moustache and beard.

“Ordener you are welcome. Ordener the traveller, a thousand good wishes to the traveller who has not forgotten the prisoner.”

“But,” questioned Ordener, “you had forgotten me?”

“I had forgotten you,” returned Schumacher relapsing into his state of gloom, “as one forgets the refreshing breeze, which cools us and passes by, happy for us

when it does not eventually change to a hurricane and overthrow us."

"Count of Griffenfeld, you did not then expect that I should return?"

"The old Schumacher had lost all count, but there is a young girl here who only yesterday remarked that on the eighth of May last a year had elapsed since you had been absent."

"Ordener trembled.

"What, great heavens, was that your Ethel, noble count?"

"Who else could it have been?"

"Has your daughter then, my lord, deigned to count the months of my absence. Oh, how many sad days have I passed. I have travelled through all Norway from Christiania to Wardhuus, but it was towards Drontheim that my feet were always prone to lead me."

"Enjoy your liberty, young man, whilst you can. But tell me now who you are, Ordener? I wish to know you under another name. The son of one of my most inveterate enemies was named Ordener."

"Perhaps, my lord count, this inveterate enemy cherished a kindlier feeling for you, than you did for him."

"You evade my question. Perhaps I shall learn that the fruit that quenches my thirst will turn to a poison which will destroy me."

"Count!" exclaimed Ordener in tones of pain. "Count!" he repeated, as though imploring pity.

"Why should I trust in you?" answered Schumacher, "in you, who always defend the implacable Guldenlew?"

"The viceroy," answered the young man gravely, "has given orders that for the future you shall be lee entirely free within the precincts of the tower of the

Lion of Sleswig. This is a piece of news that I picked up in Berghen, and no doubt you will receive official notification of the fact."

"It is a favour that I had not hoped for, and it seems to me that you are the only person to whom I expressed my desire for privacy. But what matters it now? They diminish the weight of my fetters as my increasing years conspire to weigh me down, and no doubt, when old age has rendered me helpless, they will say, 'Go, you are free!'"

The old man smiled bitterly. Then he continued:

"And you, young man, do you still cling to your foolish ideas of independent action?"

"If I had renounced these foolish ideas I should not be here."

"How did you travel to Drontheim?"

"On horseback."

"And how did you come to Munkholm?"

"In a boat."

"Poor enthusiast, who looks upon himself as a free agent. It is not your limbs that execute your will—it is an animal, it is a material object, and you call that free will."

"My will forced others to obey me."

"To compel the weaker to obey you is to give the right to the stronger to command you. Independence can only be secured by isolation."

"You do not love mankind, count."

The old man laughed sadly.

"I weep because I *am* a man, and I laugh to scorn the who would console me for being so. You will know eventually, if you are now ignorant of it, that misfortune renders a man distrustful, as prosperity makes him ungrateful. Listen to me. You say that you come from Berghen. Tell me what is the breeze of prosperity that has breathed upon Captain Dispolsen?"

Something fortunate must have happened to him, since he has forgotten me."

Orderer cast down his eyes with a sad and gloomy expression upon his face.

"Dispolsen, my lord count! It was to speak about him that I came here to-day. I know that he possessed your entire confidence."

"You know that," answered the prisoner uneasily, "you deceive yourself. No one in this world has all my confidence. Dispolsen has, it is true, important papers of mine, and it is on my account that he went to Copenhagen to solicit an audience of the king. I confess that I relied upon him, partly because, during my brief tenure of power, I never did him a service."

"Well, noble count, I saw him yesterday."

"Your emotion tells its own tale—he has betrayed me!"

"He is dead."

"Dead!"

The prisoner crossed his arms, and bowed his head, and then he murmured:

"I told you that something fortunate had happened to him."

Then he glanced to that portion of the wall upon which were suspended the defaced signs of his former honours, and he waved his hand as though to thrust aside a grief that was oppressing him.

"It is not him that I pity—it is only one man less in the world—it is not myself. What have I to lose? But it is my unfortunate daughter. I shall be the victim of some infamous plot, and what will become of her when her father is taken from her?"

He turned quickly to Orderer.

"How did he die? Have you seen him?"

"I saw him extended on the granite slab in the

dead-house of Drontheim. "They knew not whether he had committed suicide or been assassinated."

"It is important to know that. If he has been murdered, I know from what quarter the blow comes, and all is lost; he was bringing to me papers regarding the plot that had been hatched against me, and these proofs would have sufficed to save me and destroy my enemies; it was well worth their while to suppress them. Ah, unfortunate Ethel!"

"My lord count," replied Ordener, "I will tell you to-morrow whether he has been murdered or not."

Schumacher, without replying, followed the retiring form of Ordener with a look in which was portrayed the calmness of despair, much more terrible than the calmness of death. Ordener found himself in the empty ante-chamber of the prisoner, without knowing in which direction to turn his steps. The night had come on, and the room was very dark; taking the first door that presented itself, he passed through it, and found himself in a long corridor lighted only by the moon, which shone faintly through the fleecy clouds. Its half-obscured light struggled through the tall and narrow windows, and threw reflections upon the opposite walls, which looked like a long procession of phantoms, disappearing in the darkness at the extreme end of the passage. The young Norwegian crossed himself, and directed his way to a feeble red light which showed itself far away in the distance.

Through a half-opened door he saw a Gothic chapel; a young girl was kneeling at the foot of an altar, repeating in a low tone the Litanies of the Virgin, a simple and sublime prayer which raises the soul of the penitent to the abode of the Mother of the Seven Sorrows.

The girl was dressed in black crape and white gauze, and of the observer might, at the first glance, discern

that, up to this moment, her life had been passed in sadness and innocence.

Even in this attitude of supplication, her features showed that her nature was of no common order. Her eyes and her long hair were of the deepest black, a style of beauty very rare in the North, whilst her looks, which soared heavenwards, were fired by a species of ecstasy which drowned all sad recollections.

The gazer upon her might have imagined that he saw before him a virgin from the shores of Cyprus, or from the plains around the Tiber, covered with the fantastique veils of Ossian, and prostrate before the wooden cross and the stone altar of her Saviour.

Ordener trembled so that he could hardly retain his footing, for full well he recognised the form of her who was bent in earnest prayer.

She was praying for her father—for the mighty that had fallen—for the prisoner and the captive; and she repeated in a loud voice the Psalm of Deliverance. She prayed for another, but Ordener could not hear the name of him for whom she prayed, for it did not escape her lips; only she repeated with unction the Song of the Sennamite, the wife who longs for the coming of her lord and the return of the well-beloved.

Ordener retreated from the gallery; he did not wish to disturb that virgin soul in its pure communication with its God, but his heart was filled with a hitherto unknown feeling of delight, in which, however, religion had no part.

The door of the chapel closed gently, and the white figure of the girl, holding a light, came towards him. He stopped, for he had never experienced such sensation; he pressed himself against a door of the wall; his joints seemed to refuse

their duties, and in the profound silence he could hear his heart beating audibly.

As the young girl passed him she heard the rustling of his cloak and his hurried breathing.

"Just Heavens!" she exclaimed.

Ordener rushed forward; with one hand he clutched her fainting form, and with the other he vainly strove to save the lamp, which was extinguished as it fell.

"Fear not, it is I!" murmured he gently.

"It is Ordener!" said the girl, as the voice which she had not heard for a year rang in her ears.

And a passing moonbeam lit up her charming face, as, timid and confused, she disengaged herself from the arm of her supporter.

"It is the Lord Ordener!"

"Himself, Countess Ethel."

"Why do you call me Countess?"

"Why do you call me Lord?"

The girl kept silence and smiled, the man kept silence and sighed.

She was the first to break the silence:

"How is it that you are here?"

"Forgive me if my presence annoys you—I came to speak to your father."

"Then," said Ethel, in a tone of pique, "you only came to see my father."

The young man bent his head; he felt how unjust these words were.

"No doubt you have been at Drontheim some time," continued she, in accents of reproach; "your absence from Munkholm has not appeared to you to have been very long?"

Ordener, deeply wounded, made no reply.

"I approve of your conduct," continued the fair prisoner, in a voice in which pride and sorrow struggled

for the mastery; "but I hope that you did not hear me pray."

"Countess," answered the young man, "I *did* hear you."

"It was hardly courteous for a stranger to play the eavesdropper."

"I was not eavesdropping, noble countess, and yet I heard your prayer," answered Ordener faintly.

"I was praying for my father," said the girl, looking fixedly at him, as though she expected an answer to this simple speech.

Ordener kept silence.

"I also prayed," continued she, as if she was uneasy and anxious to know the effect that her words would produce; "I was also praying for some one that bears your name, for the son of the Viceroy, the Count Guldenlew; we must pray for all the world, you know, even for our persecutors."

"Ordener Guldenlew is unfortunate, noble lady, if you place him amongst the number of your persecutors; but he is happy in not being forgotten in your prayers."

"Oh, no!" cried Ethel, trembling and alarmed at the cold air of the young man. "No, I did not pray for him. I do not know what I did, or what I am doing. As for the son of the Viceroy, I detest him, though I do not know him; do not look at me with that severe expression. Have I offended you? Can you make no allowances for a poor prisoner? you, who, no doubt, pass your leisure with some beautiful and high-born lady as free and happy as yourself."

"I, Countess!" exclaimed Ordener.

Ethel burst into tears, and in a moment Ordener was in her feet.

"Did you not tell me," continued she, smiling.

through her tears, "that you had found the time of absence short?"

"I, Countess! never."

"Do not style me thus, I am not Countess for anyone, least of all for you."

Ordener leapt to his feet, and pressed her convulsively to his heart.

"Oh, my adored Ethel! call me your Ordener; tell me"—and he cast a burning glance at her tear-bedewed eyes—"tell me that you love me!"

What the young girl answered could not be heard, for Ordener, beside himself with rapture, took from her lips—as she opened them to speak—a passionate kiss, that kiss which, in the sight of heaven, joins two lovers in a sacred bond. Both remained silent for a time, for it was one of those solemn moments—too short and rare—in which the soul seems to experience in some way the feelings of divine happiness.

It is in those indescribable moments, when two spirits hold silent communion with each other, that all that appertains to earth disappears, and that two immaterial beings unite together and make a compact never to part during life, in this world, or in eternity in the next.

Ethel had gently withdrawn herself from the embrace of Ordener, and they were now gazing at each other with looks of passion, only the burning glances of Ordener gleamed with all the boldness of a lion; whilst the half-veiled look upon the young girl's face bore the imprint of that angelic modesty which, in the virgin heart, mingles with the first feelings of love.

"You were avoiding me in the corridor, just now, my Ordener."

"I was not avoiding you; I was like a blind man, to whom sight has suddenly been restored, and who shades his eyes from the dazzling li

"It is rather to me that your comparison refers ; for, during your absence, I had no other happiness than in the presence of my poor father, and I passed the weary days in consoling him ; and," added she, lowering her eyes, "in longing and hoping for your return. I read to my father the legends of the Edda ; and when I heard him express his distrust for his fellowmen, I read to him from the Holy Evangelists, so that, at the least, he might not distrust the ways of Providence ; then I spoke to him of you, and he was silent, which proves that he loves you ; only, when I had uselessly watched all the roads by which travellers enter the city, and eagerly scanned each vessel that entered the harbour, he would shake his head with a bitter smile ; and then I would weep. This prison where, up till then, my life had been spent in comparative contentment, became odious to me ; and my father, who before had always filled up my life, became insufficient as I thought of you, and I longed for that liberty which I had never experienced."

There was in the eyes of the girl so much purity and tenderness, and in the soft hesitation in which she gave vent to her feelings an inexpressible charm which human words cannot describe, and Ordener listened to her with the dreamy joy of one who has been removed from this material earth to take part in the pleasures of an ideal world.

"And for my part," said he, "I no longer care for that liberty which you cannot share with me."

"What, Ordener," exclaimed she, "will you not leave me again ?"

"My Ethel," answered he, "it is necessary that I should quit you this evening, but to-morrow I will return ; then I must leave you for a time, until I return never to quit your side again."

"Alas !" interrupted she, "absent once more——"

"I repeat, my best beloved Ethel, that I shall soon return to tear you from this prison, or to remain in it with you for ever."

"What, a prisoner with you!" said she softly. "Ah, do not deceive me. What greater happiness could I wish for?"

"What oath can I take to convince you?" cried Ordener. "Tell me, my Ethel, are not you my wife?" and, overcome by passion, he clasped her tightly to his breast.

"I am thine," murmured she feebly.

Then these two noble and pure hearts beat against each other, and one was as noble and as pure as the other. Suddenly a violent burst of laughter startled them, and a man, muffled in a long cloak, cast the light of a dark lantern upon the confused and startled countenances of the two lovers.

"Courage, my pretty couple, courage! but it seems to me that after having travelled for so short a period in the country of Passion, you have not followed all the windings of the brook Tenderness, and must have taken some short cut across country to have arrived at the village of Kissing."

In the speaker our readers have no doubt recognised the lieutenant who so much admired the works of Mademoiselle de Scudéry.

Torn from his perusal of *Clélie* by the clocks striking midnight, which had been unheeded by the lovers, he started on his nightly round of inspection.

In passing the eastern corridor he had caught the sounds of conversation, and had seen two figures moving in the gallery illumined by the rays of the moon. This sight naturally excited his curiosity, and drawing the slide of his lantern he advanced on tiptoe, until his rough burst of laughter so disagreeably aroused the lovers from their ecstasy. For an instant

Ethel recoiled from Ordener; then instinctively she shrank closer to him for protection, and buried her burning face in his bosom.

The latter looked boldly around him.

"Woe to him," cried he, "who shall venture to frighten or annoy my Ethel!"

"Yes, indeed," responded the lieutenant, "woe to me if I have had the misfortune to alarm the tender Mandana."

"Lieutenant," cried Ordener, in haughty tones, "I order you to be silent."

"Mr. Insolence," replied the officer, "I order you to be silent."

"Do you understand me?" cried Ordener, in a voice of thunder; "purchase our pardon by your silence."

"*Tibi tua*," responded the officer, "buy my pardon by your silence."

"Not a word!" cried Ordener, in a voice that made the windows tremble; and placing the terrified girl in an old chair, he grasped the officer firmly by the arm.

"Ho, peasant!" exclaimed the lieutenant, in half-laughing and half-angry tones. "Do you not remark that the velvet of the tunic that you are so brutally crumpling comes direct from the looms of Abingdon?"

Ordener looked sternly on him.

"Lieutenant," said he, "my patience is shorter than my sword."

"I understand you, gallant sir," answered the lieutenant with an ironical smile, "you are quite willing that I should do you such an honour, but remember, 'Prince against prince, and shepherd against shepherd,' as the handsome Leander says."

"If I said coward against coward," returned

Ordener, "I certainly should not have the distinguished honour of crossing swords with you."

"I am sorry, most noble shenherd. You see if you only wore a uniform——"

"If I wear neither lace or fringe, lieutenant, I carry a sabre."

The haughty young man had thrown back his cloak, placed his cap proudly upon his head, and grasped the hilt of his sword, when Ethel, aroused by the coming danger, threw her arms around his neck with a cry of terror and entreaty.

"You do wisely, lady, to endeavour to prevent this young man from being punished for his insolence," said the lieutenant, who, at the hostile movement of Ordener, had calmly placed himself on guard; "for Cyrus was about to become angry with Cambyzes, if it is not doing too much honour to this rustic to compare him with Cambyzes."

"In the name of heaven, Lord Ordener," pleaded Ethel, "do not let me be the cause or the witness of such a misfortune." Then, raising her beautiful eyes to his, she added: "Ordener, I entreat you!"

Ordener slowly sheathed his half-drawn sabre, whilst the lieutenant exclaimed:

"On my honour, chevalier, I am ignorant who you are, but I give you the title that you appear to deserve. You and I, though we may be following out the laws of courage, are not acting according to those of courtesy. The lady is right. An engagement like that which I think that I am justified in entering into with you ought not to be arranged in the presence of fair dames, although they may be the cause of it: We can, however, without offending etiquette speak of the *duellum remotum*, and, as the injured party, if you desire to fix the arms, time and place, my fine Toledo rapier or my dagger from Merida is ready to meet your

chopping knife from the forge of Ashkreuth, or your hunting sword, tempered in the Lake of Sparbo."

The "postponed duel" which the officer proposed to Ordener was a well-known custom in the North, from whence, indeed, the practice of duelling is said to have been derived. The bravest gentlemen were in the habit of proposing and accepting the *duellum remotum*, which was sometimes put off for months, sometimes even for years, and during that interval the adversaries were not to allude to the subject either by word or deed; thus, were it a love quarrel, the rivals were compelled to abstain from visiting the lady who was the cause of the disagreement, so that matters might remain in the same position that they were at the commencement of the affair. Every confidence was reposed in the loyalty of the adversaries, in the same manner as in the ancient tournaments; if the judge imagined that any of the laws of honour had been violated he would cast his warder into the lists, and on the instant each combatant would remain immovable, until the matter should be cleared up, but no alteration of position would take place, nor would the sword of the conqueror be moved a hand's breadth from the throat of the vanquished.

"It is well, chevalier," said Ordener after a moment's reflection. "In a month a messenger shall give you notice as to time and place."

"That will suit me admirably," answered the lieutenant, "for it will give me the time necessary to be present at the marriage of my sister, for you must know that you will have the honour to meet the future brother-in-law of a great noble, the son of the Viceroy of Norway, the Baron Ordener Guldenlew, who upon the occasion of his 'illustrious espousals' (as Artamenes calls them) will be created Count of Danneskiold, and colonel and knight of the Order of the Elephant, and

I, myself, who am the son of the Grand Chancellor of the two kingdoms, will, without doubt, be promoted to the rank of captain."

"Good, very good, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld," replied Ordener impatiently. "You are not yet a captain, nor is the son of the viceroy a colonel, and sabres are always sabres."

"And rustics are always rustics, however much honour you may do them," muttered the officer between his teeth."

"Chevalier," continued Ordener, "you understand the laws of honour; you will no more enter this part of the castle, and you will keep silence regarding the affair."

"As for silence," answered the lieutenant, "I shall be as dumb as Mutius Scævola with his hand amongst the red-hot coals. And as for entering the tower, I shall do so no more, nor will anyone of the garrison, for I have to-day received the order to leave Schumacher unguarded, which, by the way, I ought to have communicated to him before, but I was trying on a new pair of boots from Cracovia—it is a most imprudent order. Would you like to see my new boots?"

During this conversation, Ethel, who, seeing them conversing amicably and understanding nothing about the *duellum remotum*, imagined that all had been peacefully arranged, glided away with a gentle pressure of the hand and a soft whisper of "To-morrow," in Ordener's ear.

"Will you assist me, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld, in leaving the fort?"

"Willingly," replied the officer, "but it is rather late, or perhaps it would be more correct to say early. How will you manage for a boat?"

"I will arrange that matter," said Ordener.

Conversing in a friendly manner upon various

matters, they passed through the garden, the circular court, the parade, the artillery ground and the main portcullis, until the door at the guard-room was opened at the orders of the lieutenant.

"Till I see you again, then, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld?" said Ordener.

"Until I have that pleasure," answered the lieutenant, "for I believe that you are an adversaary worthy of my sword, and I feel sure that you will prove yourself to be so."

They shook hands, the gate was again closed, and the lieutenant, humming one of Lulli's newest airs, returned to his Polish boots and his French romances.

Ordener, left alone on the edge of the rocks, undressed himself leisurely, and made a bundle of his clothes, which he fastened with his sword-belt upon his head, and then, determining to practise the principles of independence which Schumacher had inculcated, he entered the calm, cold waters of the gulf, began to swim through the midst of the darkness to the opposite bank, directing his course towards the Spladgest, a point at which he was certain to arrive either alive or dead.

The emotions of the day had weakened him considerably, and he had a hard struggle to reach the shore; when he had done so he dressed himself in haste, and directed his steps towards the mortuary, which stood up before him like a black mass, for by this time the moon had almost entirely disappeared.

On approaching the building he heard the sound of voices, and there was a feeble glimmer of light from the opening at the top.

Astonished at this, he knocked noisily at the door, when the sounds at once ceased, and the light disappeared.

Again he knocked, when the light, reappearing for an instant, permitted him to see something scramble through the opening in the roof and instantly disappear.

A third time Ordener, using the *Milt* of his sabre, struck upon the door, exclaiming:

“Open, in the name of His Majesty the King and of His Serene Highness the Viceroy.”

The door at last was slowly opened, and Ordener found himself confronted by the tall, pale, emaciated form of Spiagudry, who, with haggard eye and blood-stained hands, raised a lamp above his head, the flame of which trembled less than did any limb and member of the guardian of the dead.

CHAPTER VI.

SACRILEGE AND MUTILATION.

ABOUT an hour after the young traveller had left the mortuary of Drontheim, the close of the day had caused the curious crowd to disperse. Oglypiglap had closed the outer door, whilst his master Spiagudry for the last time threw a few more buckets of water over his bodies; then they both retired to their squalid dormitories; but, whilst the Lapp snored on his trestle bed as unconscious as one of the corpses confided to his charge, the venerable Spiagudry, seated at a stone table upon which were heaped together old books, dried plants, and fleshless bones, was absorbed in his studies, which, though innocent enough of themselves, had procured for him the reputation of dealing with the powers of darkness, a calumny which the ignorant at that period were always ready to heap upon the heads of those who busied themselves with scientific researches.

He had been for some hours busily engaged, and was about to retire to his couch, when his attention was arrested by this weird passage in the works of Thormodus Torfœus: "When a man lights his lamp, death will often be with him before he can extinguish it."

"It shall not be so in my case, learned doctor," muttered he, "at least not this evening," and grasping

his lamp, he was about to blow it out, when a voice which came from the chamber of the dead uttered his name :

“Spiagudry!”

Every limb of the guardian of the dead trembled. He did not believe, as many another in his place would have, that his dead guests had risen up against him, for he had too much knowledge to believe in imaginary fears, but his terror was not the less real from his recognising too well the accents of the voice that called to him.

“Spiagudry,” repeated the voice angrily, “must come and tear your ears off to make you hear,”

“May Saint Hospice have pity not on my soul, but on my body,” murmured the terrified old man, as with unwilling steps he moved towards the door that led to the chamber of the dead, and threw it open.

The lamp which he bore in his hand revealed a hideous picture. Upon one side was the emaciated figure of Spiagudry, tall, with stooping shoulders, and upon the other stood a little man, short and thick-set, clothed from head to foot in the dried skins of various animals, marked here and there with splashes of blood, whilst the corpses of Stadt, the girl, and the captain, occupied the centre of the scene.

The features of the little man, which the smoky flame of the lamp lighted up, had a hideously savage expression.

His beard was red and bushy, and his head, which was partially hidden by a cap made of elk-skin, seemed to be thickly covered with hair of a similar colour; his mouth was large, with very thick lips; his teeth white and pointed, with wide spaces between them; his nose was curved like the beak of

his greyish blue eyes, which were never still for an instant, darted upon Spiagudry a look in which the ferocity of the tiger was mingled with the maliciousness of the ape.

This strange-looking being was armed with a long sabre, and a sheathless dagger was stuck in his belt; he carried an axe with a double head, composed of some kind of stone, upon the long handle of which his hands rested, covered with immense gloves made of the skin of the blue fox.

"This old ghost has made me wait a long time," muttered he, as though speaking to himself, "and he concluded his words with a roar more like that of a wild beast than a human being.

If the pallid features of Spiagudry could have grown paler they would certainly have done so.

"Do you know," continued the little man, addressing him directly, "that I have come from the Sands of Urchtal. May I ask if it is your wish to exchange your bed of straw for a stone one like these?" and he pointed significantly to the granite slabs.

Spiagudry's terror increased, his two last remaining teeth chattered with fear.

"Pardon me, master," murmured he at length, bending down his tall body to the height of the little man, "but I was buried in deep slumber."

"Do you wish me to teach you a deeper one?"

The face of Spiagudry assumed an expression of profound terror, which, however, suited his features better than an attempt at gaiety.

"Well," continued the little man, "what is it—are you not pleased to see me?"

"Oh, my lord and master," replied the old guardian, "what could give me greater happiness than the sight of your excellency?"

And the effort which he made to put on a smile

would almost have made a grin appear upon the faces of the dead.

"You old tailless fox, my excellency first commands you to hand over to him the clothes of Gill Stadt."

As he uttered this name his features, which had had a savage sneer imprinted upon them, became melancholy and sad.

"Oh, pardon me, master, but I have them not. Your grace knows that we are compelled to give over all property belonging to the miners to the officials appointed by the king, who claims to be their heir."

The little man turned towards the corpse, crossed his arms, and muttered in a low voice :

"He is right; these unfortunate miners are like the eider duck—first they make its nest, and then they rob it of its down."

Then, grasping the corpse in his arms, and, embracing it with all his strength, he uttered a series of savage cries indicating love and grief, similar to the sounds that a bear utters when caressing its cubs; and these inarticulate noises were occasionally mingled with words in a tongue that Spiagudry could not comprehend.

At last he let the body fall back upon the slab, and, turning to the guardian, exclaimed :

"Do you know, you accursed sorcerer, the name of that misbegotten soldier who had the ill-luck to be loved by this girl in preference to Gill?" and he rudely kicked the icy remains of Guth Sterson.

Spiagudry made a negative sign.

"Ah, never mind, for by the axe of Ingulphus, the chief of my race, I will destroy all those that wear that uniform," and he pointed to the clothes hanging over the head of the officer's corpse; "and then the villain cannot escape me. I will burn a whole forest to destroy the one poisonous plant that it contains. I swore I would do so on the day that I heard of Gill's death."

and I have already given him a companion that ought to rejoice his soul. Oh, Gill! there you lie without life or motion—you who could catch the seal in his native element, and outstrip the chamois of the rocks; you, who in open fight have strangled the bears of Kole. There you lie motionless, who could run from Orkel to the lake of Smiasen in a day; you, who could climb the peaks of the Dofre Field as the squirrel ascends the oak; there you are, speechless, whose voice could make the caverns of Konigsberg echo like the thunder. Oh, Gill! vainly was it for your sake that I destroyed the mines of Faroër, and in vain was it that I burnt for you the Cathedral of Drontheim. All my efforts are lost, and I shall never see the race of the children of Iceland, the descendants of Ingulphus the Exterminator, perpetuated by you. You will not be the heir to my axe of stone; on the contrary, it is you who will leave me your skull, in which to drink the waters of the sea and the blood of men!"

With these words he seized the head of the corpse.

"Assist me, Spiagudry," cried he, and tearing off his gloves he disclosed his enormous hands, armed with long, strong nails, curved over like those of a wild beast.

Spiagudry, who saw that he was about to cut off the head with his sabre, exclaimed, in an accent of horror that he could not repress:

"Just heaven, master, a dead man!"

"Ah!" replied the little man tranquilly, "perhaps you would rather that I should sharpen this blade upon a live one?"

"Oh! but, permit me to entreat your excellency. How can you, your excellency, commit this profanation, my lord. You would not wish——"

"Be silent; what need have I for all these titles, you living skeleton; you respect my sabre, and that is all."

"By Saint Waldemar, by Saint Usuph, in the name of Saint Hospice, respect the dead!"

"Assist me, and send your saints to the devil!"

"My lord," continued the suppliant Spiagudry, "by your illustrious ancestor, Saint Ingulphus."

"Ingulphus the Exterminator was beyond the pale of salvation, as I am."

"In the name of heaven!" pleaded the old man, throwing himself upon the ground, "do not do this, and save your immortal soul!"

The little man had come to the end of his patience, his eyes glittered and shone like two coals of fire.

"Assist me," he roared, brandishing his sabre.

These words were accompanied with a roar like that of a lion.

Half dead with terror, and trembling in every limb, Spiagudry sat down upon the black slab and supported the dead man's head in his hands, whilst the other, with the assistance of sabre and dagger, separated the head from the trunk with great dexterity.

When the operation was finished, he looked silently at the bleeding head for some time, uttering a string of unknown words; then he handed it to Spiagudry, ordering him to remove the flesh and wash it, exclaiming, with another howl of anguish:

"And now I shall not, when dying, have the consolation of knowing that I leave an heir of the blood of Ingulphus to drink from my skull the waters of the sea or the blood of men!"

After being lost for a few minutes in gloomy thought, he continued:

"Hurricane follows hurricane, and avalanche brings down avalanche, and I—I shall be the last of my race. Why did not Gill hate all the human race as I do? Some demon enemy of the Demon Ingulphus must

have urged him to seek those fatal mines in search of a little gold."

Spigudry, who had brought back the head, interrupted him:

"Your excellency is right—'Gold itself,' says Snorro Sturleson, 'is often bought too dearly.'"

"You remind me of a commission that I have for you. See this iron box that I found upon that officer from whom you perceive you have not inherited everything. It is so carefully closed that it must contain articles of value—gold perhaps, the only thing that is precious in man's eyes. Take it to the Widow Stadt, in the village of Throetrec. It will console her for the loss of her son."

He took from a bag made of the skin of the reindeer a small iron casket. Spigudry received it with a bow.

"Fulfil my orders faithfully," said the little man, with a threatening look. "Remember that there is nothing to prevent our meeting again, but I think, in your case, cowardice will out-weigh avarice. You will answer to me for the safe delivery of this casket."

"Master, on my soul——"

"No, no! For the sake of your flesh and bones."

At this instant a sudden knocking was heard at the outer door of the dead-house. The little man started, and Spigudry covered the flame of the lamp with his hand.

"What is that?" growled the little man. "And you, miserable wretch, why do you tremble as if you heard the last trumpet?"

Again the knocking was repeated.

"It is a dead man in a hurry to get to bed."

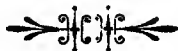
"No, master," murmured Spigudry, "they do not bring bodies after midnight."

“Dead or alive, he drives me away. Remember, Spiagudry, silence and obedience, and I swear to you, by the spirit of Ingulphus and by the skull of Gill, that you shall hold a review of the whole of the regiment of Munkholm in your charnel house.”

And the little man, hanging the skull to his girdle and resuming his gloves, aided by the shoulders of Spiagudry sprang with the bound of a chamois to the aperture in the roof, through which he disappeared.

A third blow made the door of the dead-house shake, and a voice was heard, ordering it to be opened in the names of the king and the viceroy.

Then Spiagudry, agitated by the terrors which may be called recollection and anticipation, crept to the door and threw it open.



CHAPTER VII.

FOX AND VIPER.

AFTER he had left Poel the Governor of Dron- them threw himself into a large arm-chair, and, in order to withdraw his thoughts from the subject that had been occupying him, ordered his secretary to read him the petitions that had been sent in.

The official bowed, and at once commenced :

1st: "The Reverend Doctor Anglyvius petitions that the Reverend Doctor Foxtipp, Director of the Episcopal Library, may be removed, upon the grounds of incapacity. The petitioner is ignorant who could perform the functions of the incapable Doctor Foxtipp, but desires it to be made known that he, the Doctor Anglyvius, has for a long time performed the duties of librarian——"

"Refer him to the bishop," interrupted the governor.

2nd. "Athanasius Munder, priest, Chaplain of the Royal Prisons, begs for the pardon of twelve criminals on the occasion of the illustrious marriage of Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorwick, and Knight of the Dannebrog, son of the Viceroy of Sweden, with the Lady Ulrica, daughter of His Grace the Count of Alefeld, Grand Chancellor of the Two Kingdoms."

"Adjourn the petition," said the general. "I pity the criminals."

3rd. "*Fauste-Prudens Derstrombidès*, a subject of Norway, petitions to be permitted to compose a Latin epithalamium upon the noble couple——"

"Ha, ha! the good man must be getting old; for he is the same who, in 1674, composed a marriage ode on a proposed marriage between Schumaeher, then Count of Griffenfeldt, and the Princess Louise Charlotte, of Holstein-Augustenburg, which never took place. I fear," muttered the general, between his teeth, "that *Fauste-Prudens* is the poet of broken-off marriages. Adjourn the petition, the poet shall be communicated with when matters are more completely settled."

4th. "The miners of *Guldbranshal*, of the Islands of *Faroer*, of *Sund-Moer*, of *Hubfallo*, of *Rœraas* and of *Kongsberg* petition to be released from the Royal Tax."

"These miners are becoming restless; report says that they have already commenced to murmur at receiving no reply to their petition. Let the matter be thoroughly enquired into."

5th. "The Syndics of *Noes*, *Lœvig*, *Indal*, *Skongen*, *Stod*, *Sparbo*, and other towns and villages in Northern *Drontheimhuus* petition that a price be set upon the head of the robber, murderer and incendiary, *Han*, a native of *Klipstadur* in Iceland.

"A counter petition from *Nyehol Orugix*, executioner of *Drontheimhuus*, who pretends that *Han* belongs to him; this is supported by a statement of *Benignus Spiagudry*, keeper of the dead-house at *Drontheim*, who claims the body after execution."

"This *Han* is a dangerous rascal," said the general; "the more so that trouble is brewing amongst the miners. Let it be proclaimed that a reward of one thousand royal crowns is offered for his head."

At this moment the door of the room was thrown

open, and an usher announced in a loud voice: "The noble lady the Countess d'Ahlefeldt."

A tall lady, richly dressed in scarlet satin bordered with ermine and gold fringe, and wearing upon her head a countess's coronet, entered the room, and, extending her hand to the general, took a seat near him.

The countess was about fifty years of age, and was still good-looking, though pride and ambition had left their traces upon her face.

"Well, my lord general," said she, "your pupil is keeping us waiting; he ought to have been here before sunset."

"He would be here, countess, now, if immediately upon his arrival he had not left for Munkholm."

"To Munkholm? I trust that it was not to see Schumacher that he went to Munkholm."

"It might easily be so."

"The first visit of the Baron of Thorwick to be made to Schumacher!"

"Why not, countess? Schumacher is in misfortune."

"How, general, do you consider it right that a son of the viceroy should visit a state prisoner?"

"Frederic Guldenlew, noble lady, in confiding his son to me, begged me to bring him up as I should have brought up my own. I considered that an acquaintance with Schumacher would be useful to Ordener, who will one day hold a very high position. Accordingly, with the consent of the viceroy, I procured from my brother, Grummard de Knud, a permission to visit all the prisons, which I handed to Ordener, and of which he has made use."

"And how long ago is it, noble general, that the Baron Ordener made this acquaintance?"

"More than a year, countess. It seemed that the

society of Schumacher pleased him, for he remained some time at Drontheim, and it was with regret, and at my express wish, that he left last year for a tour through Norway."

"And Schumacher knows that his visitor is the son of one of his greatest enemies?"

"He knows that he is a friend, and that is enough."

"But, general," said the countess, with a keen glance, "in tolerating, and even in initiating this acquaintance, did you know that Schumacher had a daughter?"

"I did know it, countess."

"And did you think that it was wise to throw your pupil in the way of temptation?"

"The pupil of Levin de Knud, and the son of Frederic Guldenlew, is honour itself. Ordener knew well the barrier which separated him from the daughter of Schumacher, and he would seek no girl with dishonourable intentions, least of all the daughter of an unfortunate man."

The Countess d'Ahlefeld blushed, and then grew pale; she turned her head, as though seeking to avoid the calm glance of the old man, which seemed that of an accuser.

"But," stammered she, "I must say that I think this acquaintance most imprudent. Report says that the miners in the North are ripe for revolt, and that Schumacher's name is mixed up with the affair."

"Noble lady, you surprise me. Schumacher has endured his imprisonment with the greatest resignation. No doubt this report has no foundation."

The door again opened, and the usher announced that a messenger from his Grace the Grand Chancellor was desirous of speaking to the countess.

The countess rose hurriedly, took leave of the

general, leaving him to his petitions, and hastening to her own apartments, situated in another wing of the palace, ordered the messenger to be brought before her.

She was seated upon a couch, surrounded by her ladies-in-waiting, when he arrived.

As he entered, the countess could not refrain from a movement of repugnance, which, however, she disguised under a smile of welcome.

The appearance of the messenger at the first glance had nothing in it to inspire a feeling of disgust. He was a man of medium height, with a tendency to corpulency. It was, however, in looking at him closer that the affected openness of his expression degenerated into insolence; and the gaiety of his manner concealed something diabolical and sinister beneath it. He bowed profoundly, and presented a sealed packet to the countess.

"Noble lady," said he, "permit me to place at your feet a message which his excellency, your illustrious husband, has sent you."

"Is he not coming himself, and how is it that he sends you?" asked the countess.

"Important matters have deferred the arrival of his grace, and this letter will inform you on the subject. For my own part, I have a confidential message from my noble master which I must deliver to you in private."

The countess grew pale.

"A private interview with you, Musdœmon?"

"If it annoys you, noble lady, your unworthy servant will be in despair."

"Annoy me; not at all," answered the countess, with a forced smile, "but is this interview really necessary?"

The messenger bowed to the earth

"So necessary, that the letter the illustrious countess has received from my hands mentions the matter."

It was a strange thing to see the haughty Countess d'Ahlefeld humble and grow pale before a servant who treated her with such profound respect.

She slowly opened the letter and read it.

"Leave us," said she in a low voice to her ladies-in-waiting; "I would be alone."

They were in another instant left to themselves.

"Elphège, hast thou then forgotten the time when our being alone together would have caused you pleasure?"

It was the messenger who thus addressed the noble countess, and his words were accompanied by a laugh such as the demon might give when, the term of agreement having expired, he seizes upon the forfeit soul.

The noble lady cast down her humiliated head.

"How could I forget?" murmured she.

"Poor fool, why do you blush at things that no human eye has seen?"

"What men do not see, God sees."

"God! weak woman; you are not fit to have deceived your husband, for even he is less credulous than you are."

"It is not generous to insult my feelings of remorse, Musdœmon."

"Well, if you have such feelings, why do you add to them by committing fresh crimes?"

The countess hid her face in her hands.

"Elphège, it is necessary to choose either remorse and no more crimes, or more crime and no more remorse; believe me, choose the latter, it is at any rate the easiest and the pleasantest."

"Do you not think," said the countess, in a low voice, "that you will hear these words again in eternity?"

"Come, dear countess, leave off this vein of pleasantry, and if you *do* believe in eternity, remember that your ticket of admission to hell has long been signed. What good will a few years of repentance upon earth do you? They will not shorten the ages of eternity."

Then Musdœmon sat down by the countess, and passed his arm round her neck.

"Elphège," said he, "endeavour to remain as you were twenty years ago, if not physically at least morally."

The unfortunate countess was the slave of her accomplice, and she endeavoured to return this revolting caress. There was something inexpressibly disgusting in these embraces interchanged between two creatures who mutually execrated and abhorred each other. The forbidden endearments which had formerly produced feelings of sensual intoxication were now a series of tortures. Their very crime had been converted into their punishment.

The countess, to shorten her sufferings, released herself from the arms of her detested lover, and asked him with what message he had been charged by her husband.

"D'Ahlefeld," began Musdœmon, "at the moment of seeing his power consolidated by the marriage of Ordener Guldenlew and our daughter——"

"Our daughter!" exclaimed the haughty countess, casting upon Musdœmon a look of pride and disdain.

"Yes," replied the messenger coldly, "I think that Ulrica is as much mine as his. To continue, however, this marriage will not satisfy your husband, unless Schumacher is finally disposed of. From the depths of his prison he is almost as dangerous as he was in his palace. He has at the court a crowd of obscure adherents, the more powerful because they are obscure.

It was only a month ago that the king, learning that the Grand Chancellor's negotiations with the Duke of Holstein-Plœw did not move rapidly, exclaimed with impatience: 'Griffenfeld knew more than all of them put together.'

"A plotter named Dispolsen came from Munkholm to Copenhagen, and had many secret audiences; and after one of them the king demanded of the chancellor where the deeds referring to the titles and property of Schumacher had been deposited. I do not know what Schumacher is aiming at, but for a state prisoner to wish for liberty is only a prelude to his desiring to be reinstated in his power and authority. It is necessary, therefore, that he should be suppressed; death in due judicial form is what is desired, and it is to effect this that we are labouring to convict him of a heinous crime. Your husband, Elphège, under the pretext of privately inspecting the Northern Provinces, has gone to assure himself that the insurrection amongst the miners which we have been secretly fomenting will break out under the nominal auspices of Schumacher.

"It will be easy to crush it, and then we have our man. What is disturbing us is the loss of sundry documents relating to this plan which we have every reason to believe are in the hands of Dispolsen. Knowing that he had left Copenhagen for Munkholm, taking back to Schumacher his parchments, his diplomas, and perhaps the very papers which might destroy, and would certainly compromise us, we posted in the passes of the Kole mountains certain trustworthy emissaries, with instructions to make away with him, after having robbed him of these documents.

"But if he has, as they tell me, come to Berghen by sea, these precautions are useless. However, since my

arrival here I have heard a rumour that a Captain Dispsolen has been murdered. This I will inquire into. We are in addition in search of a famous scoundrel named Han of Iceland, whom we wish to place at the head of the insurgent miners. But you, my dear Elphège, what news have you to give me? How about the pretty cage bird at Munkholm? Has our son, Frederic——”

Again the pride of the countess was wounded.

“Our son!” she exclaimed.

“Why, let me see, how old is he? Twenty-four. Well, Elphège, and we are old friends of twenty-six years past, eh?”

“Heaven knows,” cried the countess, “that my son Frederic is the legitimate heir of the Grand Chancellor.”

“If Heaven knows it,” answered the messenger with a sneer, “the devil is perhaps ignorant of it. Besides, your Frederic is a mere feather-brain, utterly unworthy of me. But do not let us quarrel about such a trifle. Tell me, has he made any way with the girl?”

“Not yet, as far as I know.”

“But, Elphège, try and take a more active part in our intrigues. To-morrow I return to your husband. You can, if you like, pray that our sins may be pardoned us, as the Italians invoke the Madonna previous to committing a murder. One thing more, d’Ahlefeld must do something more for me than he has yet done, my future is bound up in yours; but I am tired of being the servant of the man of whose wife I am the lover, and——”

At that ^{very} moment midnight struck, and one of the servants entering, reminded the countess that according to the rules of the palace all lights must be extinguished at that hour, and she, delighted at closing

so painful an interview, at once recalled her ladies in waiting.

“Permit me, noble countess,” said Musdæmon, as he bowed himself out, “to preserve the hope of seeing you to-morrow, and of placing at your feet my respectful homage.”



CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE COMPACT.

“ON my honour, old man,” said Ordener, as Spiagudry appeared upon the threshold, “I began to believe that the guardianship of this place was entrusted to the dead bodies within its walls.”

“Pardon me,” answered the old man, in whose ears the words “king” and “viceroi” were still ringing, “I was,” and he repeated his former excuse, “sleeping heavily.”

“It appears to me, then, that your dead guests are not very quiet, for just now I heard them talking very distinctly.”

Signs of anxiety showed themselves in Spiagudry’s features.

“What, Sir Stranger, did you hear——?”

“Good Heavens! what does it signify? I have not come about your business, but concerning my own. Let us go in.”

The guardian of the dead had no wish to let anyone see the mutilated body of Gill; but the last words reassured him. Besides, how could he resist a strong and active man like his visitor.

He therefore let the young man pass in, and closed the door.

“Benignus Spiagudry is at your service, as far as concerns human science; but if you believe, as your late visit would lead me to suppose, that he is a

sorcerer, you are in error, *ne famam credas*, I am only a student. Enter therefore, stranger, into my laboratory."

"Not so," replied Ordener, "for it is with these bodies that my business lies."

"With these bodies?" exclaimed Spiagudry, whose terrors commenced to break out afresh; "but, sir, you cannot see them."

"Not see bodies that are placed here for inspection? I repeat to you that I am seeking for information regarding one of them, and it is your duty to give it to me. Obey me with a good grace, or I will force you to do so."

Spiagudry had a profound respect for the sabre which hung by Ordener's side.

"*Nihil non arrogat armis*," muttered he, and pulling his keys from his pocket he opened a wicket in the iron balustrade, and introduced the stranger into the inner division of the mortuary.

"Show me the patient's garments," said Ordener.

At that moment his eye rested upon the mutilated body of Gill Stadt.

"Great Heavens! what sacrilege!" he exclaimed.

"Good Saint Hospice, take pity upon me," murmured the guardian in an undertone.

"Old man," continued Ordener in a threatening voice, "are you so far removed from death that you forget the respect that is due to it, or do you not fear that the living will teach you what is due to the dead?"

"Oh!" cried the unhappy guardian, "it was not I! If you only knew," and then he stopped, for he remembered the injunction of the little man, "*Be silent and faithful!*"

"Did you see anyone on the roof?" he asked in a stifled voice.

"Yes; was that your accomplice?"

"Not my accomplice, but the criminal himself. I swear it by all the curses of hell and the blessings of heaven, by this corpse, too, that has been so brutally mutilated."

And in his despair he threw himself upon the cold pavement at Ordener's feet.

Hideous as the man was, there was an appearance of truth in his despair and protestations which convinced his listener.

"Old man," said he, "arise; if you have not laid a profane hand upon that body, do not degrade your old age."

The guardian rose. Ordener continued:

"Who has done this deed?"

"Oh, silence, my noble young lord, you are ignorant of whose name you ask me to repeat. Silence!" and once more Spiagudry repeated to himself the command, "Be silent, and faithful."

"Tell me the name of this formidable and mysterious criminal," said Ordener, "I *will* know it."

"In the name of heaven, my lord, do not speak thus, be silent, for fear——"

"Fear will not make *me* silent, but it will make *you* speak."

"Pardon me," cried the miserable Spiagudry, "my young master, pardon me, but I cannot."

"You can, for I will it; tell me the name of the profaner of the dead."

Spiagudry endeavoured to gain time.

"The mutilator of that body is the murderer of that officer."

"The officer then *was* murdered," asked Ordener, recalled by these words to his original object in visiting the Spladgest.

"Yes, without doubt, my lord."

"And by whom, by whom?"

"By the saint that your mother prayed to at the time of your birth, do not seek to know his name, and do not force me to reveal it."

"In addition to the reasons that I first had to know it, there is now added a feeling of curiosity. Old man, I command you to tell me the name of the murderer."

"Well, if it must be so," answered Spiagudry, "look at these deep wounds and scratches on the body of the victim, must they not have been caused by long and trenchant claws? These will tell you the name of the murderer."

"What," exclaimed Ordener, "was it some wild beast then—a bear?"

"No, my young lord."

"Well, but unless it was the devil——"

"Take care, do not attempt to follow up the clue too closely. Have you never heard," continued the old man, "of a human creature, of a monster rather with a man's face, whose nails are as long as those of Astaroth, whom we have destroyed, or of the Antichrist who will destroy us."

"Speak more clearly."

"'Woe be,' says the Scripture——"

"It is the murderer's name that I ask."

"The murderer's name, my lord—have pity upon me, have pity upon yourself."

"The second of your prayers prevents my acceding to the first one. Grave reasons force me to solve this riddle, do not abuse my patience longer."

"Very well, young man, but remember I am not responsible for the consequences that may ensue; this sacrilegious robber, then, is *Han of Iceland!*"

This much dreaded name was familiar to Ordener.

"What!" exclaimed he, "Han, that bandit chief—ain?"

"Do not call him a bandit chief, for he always lives alone."

"But, miserable wretch, how is it that you know him—what infamous crime has linked you together?"

"Oh, noble master, do not be deceived by appearances. Is the trunk of the oak poisonous because the serpent sometimes shelters beneath it?"

"Enough of idle words, if you are the friend of this villain, you must also be his accomplice."

"I am not his friend, much less his accomplice; and if my solemn oaths do not convince you of my innocence, have the goodness to consider that this abominable mutilation will, in twenty-four hours, when they come to remove the body of Gill Stadt, expose me to the punishment allotted to a sacrilegious mutilator, and that thus, though perfectly innocent of any crime, I am placed in a most appalling predicament."

This plea of personal interest had more effect upon Ordener than the suppliant voice of the unhappy guardian, and he considered in addition how impossible it would have been for the old man to have opposed any effectual resistance to the sacrilege of Han. He therefore considered for a few minutes, during which time Spiagudry endeavoured eagerly to read in his face what was passing in his mind.

At last he spoke in calm but severe tones:

"Be truthful, old man. Did you find any papers upon the body of the officer?"

"None, on my honour."

"Do you know whether Han of Iceland discovered any?"

"On that point I am entirely ignorant. I swear it by Saint Hospice."

"You are ignorant of that. Well, do you know where Han hides himself?"

"He never hides himself; he is always wandering about."

"Enough; do you know his principal haunts?"

"The pagan has as many haunts as the Island of Hitteren has reefs, or the star Sirius has rays," muttered the old man in low tones.

"Again I urge upon you," interrupted Ordener, "to speak in decisive terms. You are in some way mysteriously connected with a brigand, of whom you assert that you are not the accomplice; if you know him, you ought to know where he is likely to be. Do not interrupt me; if you are not his accomplice, you ought not to hesitate for a moment in assisting me in my search for him."

Spiagudry could not conceal his terror.

"You, noble lord?" exclaimed he. "Great Heavens, will you, so full of life, provoke and seek out this fiend? When Ingiald with the four arms fought the giant Nyerolm, at least he had four arms——"

"Well," answered Ordener with a smile, "if four arms are necessary, you have two, have you not, and will you not be my guide?"

"I your guide? How can you thus sport with an old man who has need of a guide himself."

"Listen," said Ordener, "and do not endeavour to deceive me; if this profanation, of which I am willing to believe you innocent, exposes you to the risk of the punishment of sacrilege, you cannot remain here. It will be necessary for you to fly. I will therefore offer you my protection, but on the condition that you lead me to the retreat of the brigand. Be my guide, and I will be your escort. Nay, I will go further; if I can find Han of Iceland, I will bring him back dead or alive. You can then prove your innocence, and I will guarantee that you are restored to your position as guardian of the dead. Here in the mean-

time are more royal crowns than you would gain in a year."

Orderer in preserving the argument of the purse as a concluding point, had followed the soundest principles of logic. However, one of them was sufficient for Spiágudry, he took the money and was convinced.

"Noble master," said he, "you are right." And his eyes, which had been wandering about in an undecided manner, fixed themselves hopefully upon Orderer. "If I follow you I risk one day exposing myself to the vengeance of the formidable Han, if I remain here I fall into the hands of the executioner. What the punishment of sacrilege may be, I know not. Never mind, in both cases my life is in peril, but as the sage Sœmund Sigfusim says: *Inter duo pericula æqualia, minus, imminens diligendum est.* I will follow you. Yes, noble sir, I will be your guide; but always remember that I have done my best to make you relinquish so dangerous a quest.

"So be it," answered Orderer. "You shall be my guide, old man," he continued, with a searching look. "I rely upon your fidelity."

"Ah, master," responded the guardian, "the fidelity of Spiágudry is as pure as the gold that you have just given to him."

"Take care that it remains so, or I will prove to you that the steel of my sword is of as pure metal as the other. Where do you think that we shall find Han?"

"Why as the centre of Drontheimhuus is filled with troops, which have been sent there, I know not why, by the Grand Chancellor, I should imagine that Han will have gone to the Grotto of Walderhog or to the Lake of Smiasen, our road will be by Skongen."

"When can you follow me?"

"The day has already commenced; when night comes again, and the dead-house is closed, your poor servant will commence his duties as guide, and the dead will be deprived of his fostering care. I will contrive some plan to hide for to-day the mutilation of the miner's corpse."

"Where shall I meet you this evening?"

"In the great square of Drontheim, if that will suit you, master, near the statue of Justice."

"It is sufficient, old man," replied Ordener, "the compact is made."

"Yes it is made," answered the guardian.

As he spoke a kind of growl was heard, which seemed to come from the roof. Spiagudry trembled. "What is that?" cried he.

Ordener was equally surprised.

"Is there any one here besides yourself?" he asked.

"You remind me of my assistant Oglypiglap," answered Spiagudry much relieved by the suggestion. "No doubt he sleeps noisily. 'A Lapp who sleeps,' says the Bishop Arngrim, 'makes as much noise as a woman who is awake.'"

Talking thus they gained the door of the dead-house. Spiagudry opened it gently.

"Farewell, my young master, and may Heaven protect you; this evening, should fortune take your steps to the cross of Saint Hospice, deign to offer up a prayer for the unhappy Benignus Spiagudry."

He closed the door in haste, partly from fear and partly to protect his lamp from the morning breeze, and then, turning to the body of Gill Stadt, threw some covering over it by which the mutilated portion was concealed.

Many reasons had induced him to accept the hazardous proposals of the stranger.

1st. Ordener's threats.

2nd. Fear of falling into the hands of the executioner Orugix.

3rd. An old grudge against Han of Iceland, a dislike which he hardly dared to confess to himself.

4th. The love of the study of antiquities and the knowledge that this trip would give him many means of increasing his lore.

5th. A supreme confidence that his own cunning would enable him to conceal himself from the vengeance of Han.

6th. A certain passionate adoration for the shining pieces which he had seen through the meshes of the young man's purse, more of which he hoped were contained in the iron casket stolen from the murdered captain, and destined for the Widow Stadt, who now ran a great risk of not receiving her present.

A last reason was the hope that sooner or later there would be a chance of his being restored to his post; as for whether the traveller or Han succumbed it mattered not; and at this period of his reverie, he could not forbear exclaiming aloud, "at any rate there will be one body at least for the Dead-house."

Another loud growl was heard, and the unhappy guardian shivered again.

"It cannot be the snoring of Oglypiglap," said he to himself, "the sound comes from outside, but how foolish I am to be so nervous, it is very likely only some dog down at the harbour."

He then finished arranging the body of Gill, and after closing all the doors, he threw himself upon his pallet to take some repose from the fatigues of the night, and to prepare himself for his coming exertions.

CHAPTER IX.

A PERILOUS QUEST.

THE beacon of the Castle of Munkholm had long been extinguished, and the seafarer entering the Gulf of Drontheim could discern in its place the helmet of the sentinel gleaming like a shooting star in the beams of the rising sun, when Schumacher, as was his usual custom, entered the garden of the fortress leaning upon the arm of his daughter. Both had spent a restless night, the old man's thoughts had kept him awake, whilst the young girl had experienced delicious dreams of future happiness. For some time they walked together in silence, and then the old captive, casting a grave and mournful look upon his daughter, opened the conversation.

"You smile to yourself, dear Ethel, and then you blush, you must be happy; you have no reason to blush for the past, you must therefore be smiling at the thoughts of the future."

Ethel's smile disappeared and she blushed deeper.

"My father," murmured she in tones of confusion, "I have brought the book of the Edda."

"Read it then, daughter," answered Schumacher and again buried himself in his thoughts.

Seated upon a mass of rock overshadowed by a dark pine, the melancholy captive listened to the sweet voice of his daughter as she read, without catching

her words, as the thirsty traveller listens to the soft murmur of the stream from which flows the water that has given him life.

Ethel read the history of the Shepherdess Allarya, who refused all offers from the Prince Regner Lodbrog, until he had proved himself a skilful warrior, and it was not until he returned the conqueror of the Robber of Klipstadur, Ingulphus the Exterminator, that she consented to listen to his suit.

Suddenly a rustling amongst the shrubs and a sound of footsteps interrupted her tale, and roused Schumacher from his thoughts.

Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld appeared from behind a rock, and Ethel bent her face over her book as she recognised her persecutor.

"On my word, fair lady," cried he, "I fancied that I heard the name of Ingulphus the Exterminator issue from your charming lips. I presume that it was by talking of his grandson, Han of Iceland, that you arrived so far back. Ladies love tales of robbers. Do you know that they tell strange and terrible tales of Ingulphus and his descendants? Ingulphus the Exterminator had but one son, born of the Witch Thoarka; he also left only a boy, also the child of a sorceress. For more than four centuries this race has been the scourge of Iceland, always maintained by one branch from the original tree. It is by this line of solitary heirs that the fiendish blood of Ingulphus has come down to our time, and now represented by the infamous Han of Iceland, who has just now had the happiness of occupying your maiden meditations."

The officer paused in his narrative, Ethel was silent from embarrassment, Schumacher from weariness. Delighted at finding them disposed to listen, if not to talk, the Lieutenant continued.

"The Brigand of Klipstadur has but one passion, hatred of mankind—no desire, but to injure them."

"He is wise," interrupted the old man harshly.

"He lives always in solitude."

"He is happy," said Schumacher.

The lieutenant was delighted at this double interruption, which seemed to pave the way for further conversation.

"May the god Miltira preserve us from such wisdom and such happiness! Accursed be the ill-omened winds that brought to our shores the last of these demons from Iceland! I ought not, however, to say ill-omened, for they say that it is owing to a Bishop, that we have the horror of possessing Han of Iceland. If we may believe tradition, some Icelanders having caught Han when yet a child in the Mountains of Beeversted, were about to kill him, as Astyager killed the lion cub of Bactriana, but the Bishop of Scalholt interposed, and took the whelp under his protection, hoping to make a christian of the devil. The good bishop tried a thousand plans to develop his diabolical intellect, forgetting that the hemlock, even in the hothouses of Babylon, could not be changed into the lily. And this offspring of the Fiend repaid his kindness by flying across the seas in the trunk of a tree, his flight lighted by the flames of his benefactor's palace.

"And this according to the old women's tales is how Han came to Norway, and thanks to his education has shown all the perfection of a monster, and the finish of a brigand. Since then the falling-in of the Mines of Faröer burying three hundred workmen in their ruins, the rock which overhung the village of Goleyn being thrown down during the night, causing its total destruction, the breaking of the arch of the Bridge of Han-bröen, with a crowd of passengers upon it, the

burning of the Cathedral of Drontheim, beacons on the coast extinguished during stormy nights, and a succession of murders, the victims of which lie buried in the depths of the Lakes Sparbo and Smiasen, or hidden in the Grottos of Walderhog or Ryllass, or in the ravines of the Dofrefeld, prove too well the presence of this incarnate Arimanes in the Drontheimhuus. The old women also relate that with every crime that he commits a fresh hair sprouts in his beard; it should be bushy enough by this time for the chin of an Assyrian magician. No doubt, fair lady, you are aware that the government has many times endeavoured to check the extraordinary growth of this beard——”

Schumacher once more interrupted him.

“And every attempt to arrest this man has failed,” he cried, with an ironical smile. “I congratulate the grand chancellor.”

The officer did not understand his sarcasm.

“Up to this time Han has been as invulnerable as Horatius Cocles. Old soldiers, young militiamen, countrymen, mountaineers, have all been slain by him. He is a demon whom it is impossible to avoid or to discover; and the most fortunate thing for those who seek him is to fail in finding him.”

“Fair lady,” he continued, familiarly seating himself by Ethel, who drew closer to her father, “you are no doubt surprised at the knowledge that I have procured regarding this semi-supernatural being; I had an object in obtaining this information; it was my opinion, and I should feel charmed if my fair listener would agree with me, that the exploits of Han would form the subject of a delightful romance in the style of the sublime writings of Mademoiselle de Scudéry’s Artamenes, or Clélie, of which I have only read the first six volumes as yet, but it is no less a work of ex-

ceeding merit, in my eyes. One must, however, soften down our climate, polish our legends, and modify our barbarous names. Thus Drontheim would become Durtianuno, under my magic wand; you would see its gloomy forests change into delicious groves, watered by a thousand little rivulets, much more romantic than our wild-looking cascades. Our deep and gloomy caverns would give place to charming grottos, lined with gilded rock-work and azure shells. In one of these grottos would reside a well-known enchanter, named Hannus of Thule (for you must allow that Han of Iceland is not euphemistic). This giant (you must feel that it would be absurd if the hero of the romance was not a giant) descends in a direct line from Mars, the God of War, and the Sorceress Theone (have I not softened the name of Thoarka nicely?), daughter of the Sybil of Cumæ. Hannus, after having been educated by the Chief Priest of Thule, escapes from the palace of the Pontiff in a car, drawn by fiery dragons (it would show a want of imagination to preserve the tradition of the trunk of the tree). Arrived at Durtianuno, delighted with its lovely views, and enraptured with its climate, he makes it at once his residence, and the theatre of his crimes.

“It would not be a pleasant task to relate in a bold manner the murders and outrages of Hannus; but one could soften the details, by slipping in a little love story. The shepherdess Alcippe, taking her pet lamb for a walk, through the myrtle and olive groves, should be seen by the giant, who would at once conceive a passion for her; but Alcippe’s heart is given to the handsome Lycidas, an officer who is quartered in the village near which her dwelling is; the giant is enraged at the good fortune of the officer, and the officer is irritated at the audacities of the giant. You can imagine, fair lady, how charming a little spice

romance will make even the adventures of Han. I will lay my Cracovian boots against a pair of snow shoes, that all the ladies of Copenhagen would go into ecstasies over the tale, were it written by Mademoiselle Scudéry."

The mention of the capital aroused Schumacher from the gloomy reverie into which he had fallen, during the flow of small talk, which the lieutenant had so unfortunately wasted.

"Copenhagen," he repeated. "Is there anything fresh from that quarter, lieutenant?"

"Nothing that I know of, in faith," replied the officer; "unless it be that the king has given his consent to the important marriage, which has furnished the subject for conversation in both the kingdoms."

"What do you mean?" asked Schumacher; "of what marriage are you speaking?"

The appearance of a fourth person checked the reply which rose to the lips of the lieutenant.

All three raised their eyes; the severe expression upon the prisoner's face grew milder; the lieutenant assumed an air of gravity, whilst the sweet countenance of Ethel, which had grown pale and confused during the long harangue of the officer, broke into a smile of ineffable happiness; she gave a deep sigh, as though a weight had been raised from her heart, and she glanced shyly at the new arrival.

It was Ordener.

The old man and the young girl held a singular position with regard to Ordener: they each had a secret with him, with which the other was not acquainted.

The return of Ordener to the prison surprised neither Schumacher nor Ethel, who expected him; but the lieutenant was completely dumbfounded, and his presence equally astonished Ordener; had he not been

assured that the laws of honour would close the mouth of the babbler regarding the events of the last evening, he might have feared some indiscretion upon his part; but this idea he at once banished; but still he did not understand why he was sitting with the prisoners upon such apparently intimate terms.

For a moment all kept silence, each had so much to say in private to the new comer, that it seemed impossible to open their lips in the presence of each other, so that the reception of Ordener was absolutely a silent one.

The lieutenant burst into a laugh.

"By the train of the coronation robe," exclaimed he, "here is the silence which resembles that with which the Senate of Gaul received the Roman, Brennus—stay, I really forget which were Roman, whether it was the Senate or the general. Never mind; will you assist me in informing this honourable old gentleman as to the news of the day. When you came we were talking of the illustrious marriage, which is causing the tongues of the Medes and Persians to wag so freely.

"What marriage?" cried Ordener and Schumacher at the same moment.

"By the cut of your coat, sir stranger," exclaimed the lieutenant, clapping his hands, "I had already imagined that you come from some other world. My impression now is changed into a certainty. I suppose that you disembarked yesterday on the bank of the Nidder, from the chariot of a fairy, drawn by griffins; for you could not have been long in Norway without hearing of the marriage between the son of the viceroy and the daughter of the grand chancellor."

Schumacher turned towards the lieutenant.

"Ordener Guldenlew going to espouse Ulrica d'Ahlefeld?"

"That is right," answered he, "and it will be over before the last new fashion has died out in Copenhagen."

"The son of Frederic must be about two-and-twenty, for I had been fully a year in the Castle of Copenhagen when the news of his birth reached me. He is marrying young, but when the time for his disgrace and fall comes, I daresay that they will assert that it was to obtain the red hat of a cardinal that he contracted this union."

The lieutenant did not see that the old man spoke sarcastically.

"The Baron Ordener," replied he with a laugh, "is to receive the title of count, the collar of the Order of the Elephant, and the rank of colonel, and these would hardly go with the cardinal's hat."

"All the better," answered Schumacher bitterly. "Some day they will turn his collar into a fetter, they will break his count's coronet on his forehead, and strike him in the face with his colonel's epaulettes."

Ordener seized the hand of the old man.

"Even in your hatred, my lord, do not curse the happiness of an enemy. How do you know it is happiness for him?"

"Bah," said the officer, "what matters to the Baron of Thorwick the curses of an old——"

"Stop, lieutenant," cried Ordener, "they matter more than you think, perhaps, and as for this much talked-of marriage, perhaps it is not so certain a thing as you seem to imagine."

"*Fiat quod vis*," answered the lieutenant with a smile of irony, "certainly the viceroy and the grand chancellor have settled upon this match, but of course if you, sir stranger, object, what signifies the viceroy and the grand chancellor?"

"You are nearer the mark than you think," replied Ordener with gravity.

The lieutenant nearly fell backwards with laughter.

"This is too good a joke. I would give something if the Baron of Thorwick were present, to hear a person of such importance settle his fate.' My learned prophet, believe me, you have not enough beard to set up as a sorcerer."

"Lieutenant," answered Ordener coldly, "I do not believe that Ordener Guldenlew would marry a woman without loving her."

"Ha, ha! are you going to publish a book of maxims? And pray who, Mr. Green Mantle, says that the Baron does not love Ulrica d'Ahlefeld?"

"And who on the other hand asserts that he does love her?"

Drawn away by the heat of the argument, the lieutenant asserted, as many in his position do, a fact of which he was by no means certain,

"Who says that he loves her? The question is an amusing one. I am sorry for your powers of divination, for everyone knows that the marriage is as much one of inclination as of policy."

"Except myself," said Ordener, with the same gravity.

"Except yourself, certainly, but that will not prevent the son of the viceroy from being in love with the daughter of the grand chancellor."

"In love?"

"Yes, madly in love."

"He would indeed be mad to be in love with her."

"Hold, sir! do not forget to whom you are speaking. You would have us believe that the son of the viceroy must not court a lady without the permission of a boor like you."

As he spoke, the lieutenant rose from his seat.

Ethel saw Ordener's eyes flash, and threw herself between them.

"Be calm!" she exclaimed. "What does it matter to you whether the son of the viceroy loves or does not love the daughter of the chancellor?"

Her gentle words calmed the tempest in Ordener's bosom, and he hardly heard the words of the lieutenant, who gaily exclaimed:

"The lady would fill with infinite grace the part of the Sabine matron interposing between the father and the husband. I regret that my words were hasty, for there exists a bond of union between us, and we ought not to provoke each other. Chevalier, your hand, but you must at least confess that you forgot yourself when you spoke as you did of the son of the viceroy to his future brother-in-law, the Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld?"

At this name, Schumacher, who had looked upon the scene with indifference, leaped from the stone upon which he was sitting with a cry of rage.

"d'Ahlefeld! a d'Ahlefeld before me! a serpent! How is it that in the son I did not recognise the lineaments of his execrable father? Leave me to die in peace in my prison. I was not condemned to the punishment of having you before my eyes. There is nothing wanting now but to see the son of Guldenlew standing by the side of the son of d'Ahlefeld. Traitors! cowards! they come to enjoy my tears and my madness! Leave me, spawn of an accursed race!"

The officer was at first overwhelmed with this torrent of words, but he speedily recovered himself.

"Silence, you old madman! what litanies of the Fiend are you repeating?"

"Leave me! leave me!" reiterated the old man, "and carry with you my curse upon you, and the house of Guldenlew, with which you are seeking an alliance."

"By Heavens!" exclaimed the enraged officer, "this is a double insult."

Ordener laid his hand upon the lieutenant's arm, for the latter could no longer restrain himself.

"Respect age, even in your enemy. We are to meet, and I will take his insults to you upon my own shoulders."

"Be it so," replied the young officer. "You are contracting a double debt. The combat shall be a mortal one, for I have your insults to my brother-in-law to avenge, and remember that with my glove you also pick up that of Ordener Guldenlew."

"Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld," answered Ordener, "your readiness to defend the absent shows the generosity of your nature. Would it not be moer kind to take no notice of a poor old man, whose very misfortunes give him the right to be at times unjust to others?"

d'Ahlefeld possessed one of those dispositions in which a word of praise brings out the best points. He grasped the hand of Ordener, and approached Schumacher, who, exhausted by his passion, had sunk again upon the rock, and was supported in the arms of the weeping Ethel.

"Master Schumacher," said the officer, "you have taken advantage of your age, and I, perhaps, might have forgotten it, had you not found a champion. I shall not again enter your prison, for it was to inform you that, by the commands of the viceroy, you are to remain without guards, and for this purpose I to-day entered this portion of the castle. I trust that you will not refuse to listen to this good news, even though it comes from the tongue of an enemy."

"Leave me," muttered the old man in an almost inaudible voice.

The lieutenant bowed and withdrew, highly satisfied

at receiving a smile of approbation from Ordener as he left.

Schumacher remained for some time, with his arms folded and his head bent, absorbed in his thoughts. Suddenly he raised his eyes, and glanced at Ordener, who stood silently before him.

"Well, what news?" asked he.

"My lord count, Dispolsen has been murdered."

The head of the old man again fell. Ordener continued:

"His murderer was the well-known brigand, Han of Iceland."

"Han of Iceland!" said Schumacher.

"Han of Iceland!" repeated Ethel.

"He robbed his victim," pursued Ordener.

"Then," said the old man, "you have heard nothing of a small iron casket, sealed with the arms of Griffenfeld?"

"No, my lord."

The old man pressed his hands to his forehead.

"I will bring it back to you, my lord count. Trust to me. The murder was committed yesterday morning and Han has fled to the north. I have found a guide who knows all his haunts. I, myself, know well the mountains of the Drontheimhuus. I will find the murderer."

Ethel turned pale, Schumacher raised his head with a joyful look upon his face, as if he believed that virtue could yet exist in mankind.

"Noble Ordener," exclaimed he, and raising his hand to heaven he disappeared amongst the shrubs.

As Ordener turned from him, he perceived Ethel, pale as an alabaster statue, supporting herself by clutching a rock.

"Great Heavens, my Ethel!" exclaimed he, rushing towards her, and clasping her in his arms. "What is the matter?"

"Oh!" answered the trembling girl in a scarcely audible voice, "if you have no love for me at least have some pity. If you did not utter those vows yesterday for the mere purpose of deceiving me, if it is not to cause my death that you have entered this prison, my Lord Ordener—my Ordener—in the name of Heaven and of the angels which inhabit it, renounce this mad design. Ordener, my much beloved Ordener," continued she, her tears flowing freely as her head rested on the breast of the young man, "make this sacrifice for me. Do not pursue this brigand, this frightful demon, that you desire to encounter in mortal combat. Ordener, tell me whose interests ought you to consider more than those of her who but yesterday you called your much loved wife?"

She ceased, choked by her sobs, her arms were clasped round Ordener's neck, and her pleading eyes were fixed in his.

"My adored Ethel, you alarm yourself unnecessarily. Heaven will protect those who are engaged in a good cause, and the cause for which I shall incur risk is yours, for that iron casket contains——"

"What interest have I in such matters?" cried Ethel. "And suppose you were to die, what do you think would become of me?"

"Why do you think that I shall die, Ethel?"

"But you do not know what this Han is? Do you understand what sort of a monster it is that you are about to pursue? Have you not heard that he is aided by all the powers of darkness, that he can hurl mountains upon villages, that his footsteps make the roofs of subterranean galleries fall in, that his breath extinguishes the beacons of the coast? And do you think, Ordener, that with your white hands and your slight sabre you are a match for a giant who has the aid of demons?"

"And your prayers, Ethel, and the thought that it is for you that I am fighting, do you not think that *that* will strengthen my arm? Believe me, they have grossly exaggerated both the strength and the power of this brigand. He is a man like ourselves, as well able to be killed as to kill."

"You will not listen to me? My words carry no weight with them for you? Tell me what will become of me if you leave me, and wander about from peril to peril, exposing, for I know not what earthly interest, your days, which belong to me—placing yourself in the power of a monster?"

The stories told by the lieutenant recurred anew to Ethel's imagination, and increased alike her love and her terror; in a voice broken by sobs, she continued: "I assure you, dear Ordener, that when they told you he was only a man, they deceived you; a thousand times have they endeavoured to take him, and failed; he has destroyed entire regiments, Only listen to what they say of him, and do not go."

Poor Ethel's prayers would, without doubt, have shaken the chivalrous designs of Ordener, if he had not already gone too far to draw back; the words which in the previous evening Shumacher had uttered in his despair, reverted to his memory, and strengthened his resolution.

"I could, dearest Ethel, tell you that I would not go, and carry out my project all the same, but I will never deceive you, even for the sake of calming your alarms; I ought not, I repeat, to hesitate between your tears and your interests. The task that I have undertaken involves your future fortune, your happiness, and even your life; your life, do you hear, dearest Ethel?" and he clasped her fondly in his arms.

"And what do I care for that?" cried she, still

weeping. "My love, Ordener, my happiness—for you know that *you* are my happiness—do not risk a certain danger, for the sake of shielding me from distant and doubtful ones. What to me is fortune and life——?"

"Ethel, the life of your father is at stake!"

She tore herself from his arms.

"The life of my father?" murmured she, as pale as death.

"Yes, Ethel, this brigand, bribed no doubt, by the enemies of the Count Griffenfeld, has in his hands certain documents, the loss of which may seriously compromise your father, and may even bring him to the scaffold, and it is to secure these papers that I risk my life."

For a few seconds Ethel remained silent; her face was ghastly pale, her tears had dried up, and her bosom heaved painfully. She gazed around her with a sad fixed look, such as a criminal might cast behind him when the axe of the executioner is raised above his head.

"My father's life," murmured she. Then she turned her eyes upon Ordener.

"What you are going to do is useless; but nevertheless, do it."

Ordener drew her to him. "Noble-hearted girl," exclaimed he, "let her heart beat against mine. My generous love, I shall return soon. Be sure that we shall meet again; I wish to save your father, so that I may deserve from him the name of son."

Who can describe the feelings one generous heart feels for another?

And if love unites the souls by a bond which cannot be broken, who can paint the inexpressible delights that they experience? Then, and then only, they feel, comprised in one short instant, all the happiness

and all the glory of a life embellished with the charms of generous sacrifices."

"Oh, my Ordener, go; and if you do not return, grief without hope will soon kill me; that melancholy satisfaction cannot be denied me."

They both rose up, and Ordener drawing Ethel's arm under his own, and holding her hand in his, led her through the winding paths of the garden. With sorrow they too soon arrived at the gate; then Ethel, drawing from her bosom a small pair of golden scissors, cut off a lock of her beautiful black hair.

"Take it, dear Ordener; happier than I, it will accompany you wherever you go.

Ordener pressed his lips upon the gift, whilst she continued:

"Think of me, Ordener. I will pray for you; my prayer may perhaps, be as powerful in the eyes of God, as your weapon against the demon."

Ordener bent before his beloved; his heart felt more than his tongue could express. For a few moments, they remained clasped in each other's arms. At that sad and supreme moment of parting, Ordener felt a melancholy satisfaction in clasping Ethel to his heart; he pressed a long, chaste kiss upon her forehead, and then, tearing himself away, rushed through the dark arch and down the winding stair, whilst from above, sad but yet sweet, floated the word "Farewell."



CHAPTER X.

GROPING IN THE DARK.

THE Countess of d'Ahlefeld had passed a sleepless night, and the day seemed but to increase her restlessness. Reclining upon a sofa she felt the pangs of remorse, which are ever the results of the indulgence in an unlawful passion; she thought of the crimes which destroy the happiness of life, and of ills for which there are no remedy; the thought of Musdæmon, whom her guilty fancy had formerly painted in such alluring colours, who had become so hateful to her since she had discovered the corrupt soul that lurked in his body.

The unhappy woman wept, not because she had been deceived, but because she could no longer be so. It was regret for the past, but not repentance, and so her tears had no soothing effect.

At this moment the door opened; she raised her eyes with a flash of anger in them, for she had forbidden any one to intrude on her privacy.

Her anger however, changed to surprise, as she saw Musdæmon enter, accompanied by her son Frederic.

"My mother," exclaimed the lieutenant; "how is it that I find you here; I thought that you were at Berghen; is it the custom for the court ladies thus to fly about the country?"

The countess embraced her son tenderly, but, like

spoilt children, he responded but coldly to her affectionate greeting. This was one of the punishments to which the unfortunate woman was exposed. Fred-eric was the most beloved of all her offspring, and upon him she lavished all her affection; for even in the most degraded woman the sentiment of the mother almost invariably remains.

"I am delighted, my son, to find that upon learning of my arrival at Drontheimhuus——"

"Not at all. I was so awfully bored at Munkholm that I came into town, and there I met Musdæmon, who brought me here."

The unhappy mother sighed deeply.

"But, for all that, I am delighted to see you. You can tell me if knots of rose-coloured ribbons are still worn at the knees in Copenhagen. By-the-way, have you brought me a bottle of that Oil of Jouvence for whitening the skin? You have not forgotten, I hope? Have you secured the last romance that has been translated from the French for me, and have not omitted to bring the gold lace that I wanted for my flame-coloured wrapper, nor those little combs with which it is now the fashion to fasten up the curls?"

The unhappy mother had brought none of these things; all that she had brought was her deep maternal affection.

"My dear son, I have been very ill, and my sufferings have prevented me from thinking of your pleasures."

"Been ill, have you, mother? Well, you are all right now, I hope. Tell me, how is my pack of hounds from Normandy? I will lay anything you like that the servants have forgotten to bathe my she-monkey in rose water every morning, and you will see I shall find my parakeet dead when I come home

again. Whilst I am away no one thinks of looking after my pets."

"Your mother always thinks of *you*, my son," said the countess, in broken accents.

Had it been the hour when the Angel of Vengeance casts the souls of sinful women into eternal torment, he would have felt pity for the agony then torturing the heart of the countess.

Musdæmon chuckled silently in a corner of the room.

"Master Frederic," said he, "I can see that with you the steel blade does not rust in the iron scabbard, for you do not seem to lose in the towers of Munkholn the habits of the Court of Copenhagen. But tell me, to what end this Oil of Jouvence, these rose-coloured ribbons, these little combs, and all the paraphernalia of a siege, if the only feminine fortress in Munkholm is impregnable?"

"On my honour, it is so," answered Frederic laughing, "for if I have failed, even General Schack would have done the same. How can you enter a fort which is never left open, and of which no single point is unguarded? What can you do against a ruff that hides the neck, against sleeves that cover the arms, so that, were it not for her face, the lady might be as black as the Emperor of Mauritania. My dear tutor, you are still but a scholar. Believe me, no fort can be taken when it is garrisoned by Modesty."

"You say well," answered Musdæmon; "but if Love were to attack boldly, instead of forming a blockade commanded by Delicate Attentions——"

"Trouble in vain, my friend. Love has already made his way in, and acts as a reinforcement to Modesty."

"Aha, Master Frederic, here is something new. With Love on your side——"

"And who said that he was on my side, Musdæmon?"

"On whose, then?" cried Musdæmon and the countess, who had until now listened in silence, but whose thoughts were turned to Ordener by her son's words.

Frederic was about to reply, and was preparing a racy account of the nocturnal scene that he had witnessed, when the silence to which he was bound by his hostile engagement recurred to him, and changed his gaiety into embarrassment:

"By my faith, I hardly know. Some boor—some vassal——"

"Some soldier of the garrison," cried Musdæmon, with a peal of laughter.

"What, my son," exclaimed the countess, "are you sure that she loves a peasant—a vassal? Ah, how fortunate, if we were sure!"

"Without doubt, I am sure of it. It is not a soldier of the garrison," added the lieutenant, with an air of pique. "But I am sufficiently convinced of what I say to beg you, my mother, to have my very useless sojourn in Munkholm cut short."

The features of the countess brightened as she heard this scandal regarding the young girl. The haste which Ordener evinced to visit Munkholm now assumed another aspect; she imagined it was on account of her son that he had done so.

"You shall presently tell us all you know regarding the love passages of Ethel Schumacher. As the daughter of a boor, it was to be expected that she would give her love to one of her own class. But do not abuse Munkholm, or your stay there, since it has procured for you yesterday the honour of meeting some one who has certainly lost no time in making your acquaintance."

"What person, mother?" asked the lieutenant, opening his eyes widely.

"A truce to joking, my son. Some one paid you a visit yesterday. You see that I know all."

"You certainly know more than I do, for I vow that I saw no faces yesterday except those of the gurgoyles at the corners of the old towers."

"What, Frederic, you saw no one?"

"No one, mother, on my honour."

In not mentioning his opponent, Frederic was only obeying the code of honour; besides, he did not count him as anybody.

"But," said his mother, "did not the son of the viceroy come to Munkholm yesterday?"

Frederic laughed loudly.

"The son of the viceroy! Mother, you dream, or you are joking."

"Neither one nor the other. Who was on guard yesterday?"

"Myself."

"And you did not see the Baron Ordener?"

"No; I tell you no."

"But think, my son, he might be travelling *incognito*; you have never seen him, for whilst you were brought up at Copenhagen, he was educated at Drontheim. Besides, remember he has, they say, all sorts of strange ideas as to concealing his rank. Are you sure that you saw no one?"

Frederic hesitated for a moment.

"No," cried he at length, "I saw no one."

"In that case," said the countess. "The baron has not been to Munkholm."

Musdæmon, who had listened attentively, now interrupted the countess:

"Permit me, noble lady. Master Frederic, can you tell me the name of the vassal with whom the daughter

of Schumacher is in love?" He repeated the question, for Frederic, who appeared to be buried in thought, had not replied.

"I do not know, or rather—no, I do not know."

"But how do you know, then, that she loves a vassal."

"Did I say that he was a vassal? Oh, yes, certainly, a vassal."

The embarrassment of the lieutenant increased. This close examination, the ideas that it suggested to him, and the obligation of silence that was imposed upon him, threw him into such a state of perplexity that he hardly knew what he did.

"Faith, my noble mother, and you, Musdæmon, if questioning is the fashion now-a-days, you may question each other, for I have had enough of it," and opening the door hurriedly he made his escape, plunged in a flood of conjectures, and scarcely hearing the voice of Musdæmon calling after him as he descended the staircase.

He mounted his horse and rode towards the harbour, intending to cross at once to Munkholm, where he thought he might again meet the stranger who had for once caused profound thought to the most frivolous courtier of the most frivolous court in Europe.

"If it was Ordener Guldenlew," thought he, "then alas for poor Ulrica! But no, it is impossible that he could be sufficiently insane to prefer the poverty-stricken daughter of a state prisoner to the wealthy child of a powerful minister, but even if he did so, it may be a mere passing fancy, and nothing prevents a young fellow being a little gay before his marriage; indeed, it is rather the thing—but no, it is impossible that it can be Ordener. The son of the viceroy would not be dressed in a shabby coat, and then there was his feather showing every sign of exposure to rain and

wind, and not a buckle to fasten it to his hat; a cloak big enough to make a tent of, and boots covered with mud and dust. No, no, it could not have been him. The Baron of Thorwick is a knight of the Dannebrog, whilst the stranger wore no decoration. If I were a knight of the order, I should go to bed with the collar on, I think. Then, he had never heard of the Clélie. No, it was not the son of the viceroy."



CHAPTER XI.

A PROMISE OF PROTECTION.

“WELL, Poel, what do you want? Why do you —why have you come upstairs?”

“Your excellency rang.”

“Ah, yes; I forgot. Give me that packet of papers,” and the general pointed to one which he could have reached by simply extending his hand.

Poel handed it to him. The general took it mechanically, and placed it in his drawer without opening it.

“Poel, I wished also to ask you—what time is it, by the way?”

“Six o’clock, general,” answered the man, glancing at the dial, which was immediately in front of the governor.

“Yes, what I wanted to say, Poel—ah! is there any news stirring?”

“Nothing, your excellency, except that we are waiting the return of our noble master, about whom I see you are uneasy.”

The general rose up from his writing-table, and glanced angrily at Poel.

“You are wrong. I am not the least uneasy about him. I know where he has gone to, and I do not expect him back yet.”

General Levin de Knud was so jealous of his authority that he could not bear to imagine that one

of his subordinates' had divined his secret thoughts, and could imagine that Ordener had acted independently of him.

"Poel," continued he, "you may go."

"In faith," exclaimed the governor, when he found himself once more alone, "Ordener tries me too much; the best steel blade will break if you bend it too far. He has made me pass a sleepless night, and has exposed me, the General Levin de Knud, to the questions of the wife of the chancellor, and to the conjectures of a valet, and this because he desires to embrace an old enemy before he salutes his older friend. Ordener, Ordener, your caprices show that you are not worthy of the liberty you enjoy. Just let him come now, and see what a reception I will give him—such a reception as the powder gives to the spark. To expose the Governor of Drontheim to the conjectures of a valet, and the questions of the wife of a chancellor—just let him come!" and the general began to endorse his papers without reading them, into such a bad temper had he worked himself.

"General, my noble second father," said a well-known voice, and Ordener clasped the old man, who could not repress a cry of joy, in his arms.

"Ordener, my gallant father, by all the saints, I am delighted." In the midst of this speech he remembered his grievances. "I am pleased, my lord baron, that you have learned how to master your feelings. You seem glad to see me. It was no doubt to put a restraint upon your affection, that though you have been in Drontheim for more than four and twenty hours, yet you have only just made your appearance."

"My father, you have often said that an unfortunate enemy should have the precedence of a friend who enjoys the smiles of the world. I come from Munkholm."

"You are right," answered the 'general. "If misfortune were overhanging the enemy. But the future of Schumacher——"

"Is more threatening than ever. Noble general, an odious conspiracy has been planned against him; men who were born his friends, are now seeking to ruin him. May not a man who was born his enemy endeavour to save him?"

The general, from whose face all traces of anger had passed, interrupted him:

"Good, my dear Ordener, but how can such things occur? Schumacher is under my safeguard. What men do you speak of, and what plots?"

"It would have been difficult for Ordener to have replied definitely to this question; he had but vague traces to go by, and his suppositions as to the danger that menaced the man for whom he was going to risk his life, had no certain foundations.

Many people would be ready to inveigh against the foolish manner in which he was about to act, but youth is often guided by its own ideas of justness and rectitude, but as in this world where prudence is so arid a plant, and wisdom so mingled with irony, who will deny that generosity is mere Quixotism?

Everything upon this earth is relative, everything has its limit, and virtue would be a form of insanity, if behind man there was not a God.

Ordener was of the age when youth "believes and is believed in; the general did not listen to the cold voice of reason, but accepted his statements without hesitation.

"What plots? What men? My good father, in a few days I shall know all, and then I will impart to you every portion of the information that I have gained. I must leave you again this evening."

"What!" cried the old man, "cannot you give me

a few hours? But where are you going, and why do you leave me, my dear son?"

"Before now, my dear father, you have permitted me to perform a praiseworthy action in secret."

"Yes, my dear Ordener, but you are leaving on a wild errand, I fear. Besides, remember there is urgent business to retain you here."

"My father has given me a month for me to arrive at a decision in, and I consecrate that time to the interests of another. Good actions give good resolutions, and on my return we will decide."

"Ah," replied the general in tones of anxiety, "this marriage is not to your taste, and yet they say that Ulrica d'Ahlefeld is beautiful. Tell me, have you seen her?"

"I think I have," answered Ordener. "Yes, she is beautiful."

"Well, then?" asked the governor.

"Well, then, she shall never be my wife!"

This cold and decisive answer struck the general like a violent blow, and the suspicions of the haughty countess recurred to his mind.

"Ordener," said he shaking his head, "I ought to be wise, for I have been very foolish, and perhaps now I am only an old fool. Ordener, the prisoner has a daughter?"

"He has," exclaimed the young man, "and it is of her that I wish to speak. My father, I entreat you to extend your protection to this helpless and persecuted girl."

"You speak warmly," said the governor.

"And why should I not do so," cried Ordener, "when there is an unfortunate woman from whom her enemies not only wish to take life, but what is far more precious—honour?"

"Life and honour, and I who am the governor here, am ignorant of all these meditated horrors! Explain yourself."

"My noble father, the lives of the prisoner and of his daughter, defenceless as they both are, are threatened by a vile conspiracy."

"But your accusations are serious. What proofs have you?"

"The eldest son of one of our most powerful families is now at Munkholm. His mission is to seduce the Countess Ethel. He told me so with his own lips."

The general fell back a few paces.

"Great Heavens! Poor, unprotected child. Ordener, Ethel and Schumacher are under my care. Who is this wretch—what family does he belong to?"

"*The family of d'Ahlefeld!*"

"D'Ahlefeld," exclaimed the governor. "Yes, the affair is clear. Lieutenant Frederic is at this moment quartered in the castle, and they wish my noble Ordener to form an alliance with this race. I can conceive your repugnance, my brave boy."

The old man remained silent for a short time; then, turning to Ordener, he clasped him to his breast.

"Young man," he exclaimed. "You may go in peace. Your friends shall be watched over in your absence, for am not *I* here. Yes, go. You act well in doing so. That infernal Countess d'Ahlefeld is here. You perhaps know——"

"*The noble Countess d'Ahlefeld!*" announced the voice of the usher, as he threw open the door.

At the name Ordener mechanically drew back to the end of the room, and the countess, entering without perceiving him, exclaimed:

"My lord general, your pupil has played you a trick. He never went to Munkholm."

"Is that a fact?" asked the general.

"My son, Frederic, who has just left me, was on guard yesterday, and saw no one."

"Really, noble lady?"

"Thus," continued the countess with a smile of triumph, "you need not expect your baron."

The governor remained cold and impassive.

"I no longer expect him, my lady countess."

"General," returned she, looking round. "I had imagined that we were alone. Who is this?"

Ordener bowed as the countess cast a sharp glance at him.

"Ah," cried she, "certainly I have only seen him once—but—without this costume it would be, my lord general—it is the son of the Viceroy."

"He himself, noble lady," answered Ordener, bowing again.

The countess smiled.

"In that case permit a friend, who hopes soon to be called by a dearer appellation, to ask you if you went yesterday, my lord count, to——?"

"Lord count! I do not think that my noble father is dead, lady countess."

"It was not my intention to lead you to suppose so. Better become a count by taking a wife than by losing a father."

"One might prove as great an evil as the other."

The countess was silenced for a moment, but determined to treat the retort as a jest.

"They told me that you had learned plain speaking in your travels, but you will be taught to say softer things when Ulrica d'Ahlefeld places the chain of the collar of the Elephant round your neck."

"A real chain it may prove," was the reply.

"You see, General Levin," continued the countess; whose smiles were evidently forced, "that your intract-

able pupil will not now take the rank of colonel from a lady."

"You are right, countess," answered Ordener, "the man who wears a sword should not owe his epaulettes to a petticoat."

The face of the lady clouded over.

"From whence, then, does the baron come? Is it true that this courteous knight did not go yesterday to Munkholm?"

"Noble lady, I am not prepared to answer questions. General, we shall meet again."

Then, grasping the hand of the governor, and bowing to the countess, he quitted the room, leaving the lady confused by what she did not know, and the general horrified by information that had been imparted to him.



CHAPTER XII.

THE TOWER OF VYGLA.

ON the narrow and stony road which borders the Gulf of Drontheim, and leads from Drontheim to Skongen, two travellers could be seen who had left by the Skongen gate of the city at the close of day, and were rapidly ascending the tapering hills through which the road to Vyglå winds. Both were completely enveloped in cloaks. One of them walked with a firm steady step, the body upright, and the head proudly raised; the end of the scabbard of a sabre peeped from beneath his cloak, and in spite of the increasing darkness, the plumes of his hat could be seen to wave in the light breeze. The other was taller than his companion, but slightly bent; a sort of hump was caused by the knapsack which he carried on his back, underneath his great black cloak, whose frayed edges showed that it had done long and loyal service. He carried no weapon, but a long staff, with which he assisted his hurried and uneven steps.

"Master, my young master," said the latter traveller, "we have arrived at the point from which we can see at the same time the tower of Vyglå, and the cathedral of Drontheim. You see that black mass in front of us—that is the tower; behind us is the cathedral, whose flying buttresses look like the ribs of some mammoth."

"Is Vyglå far from Skongen?" asked the other traveller.

"We have the Ordals to pass, my lord; we shall not be at Skongen until three o'clock in the morning."

"What o'clock is it that is just striking?"

"Just heavens, master, you make me tremble—it is the cathedral bell, the sound of which the wind bears to our ears. Perhaps they have already discovered the mutilation, and are preparing to pursue us. Let us hasten our steps."

"Willingly, old man; your burden appears heavy. What does it contain? Just now, when you stumbled, it sounded like the clink of metal."

"No, no, master; it is not for the eagle to carry the shell of the tortoise. I am too humble for you to carry my knapsack."

"But, old man, if it wearies you, let me——"

"No, no, it only contains provisions and clothes—it does not weary me at all."

"As you like," returned the young man, "keep it if you prefer it."

The old man became less uneasy, but nevertheless hastened to change the conversation:

"It is sad to have to pass by night, and as fugitives, a road which it would be delightful to examine leisurely by daylight. Upon the borders of the gulf, upon our left side, are a quantity of Runic stones, the inscriptions upon which are traced, so they say, by the hands of the gods and the giants. On our right, beyond those rocks, are the salt marshes of Sciold, which doubtless communicate with the sea by some subterraneous canal, for in them is found that curious fish the *Lombric*, which is supposed to feed upon sand. In the tower of Vyglá, which we are approaching, the glorious martyr, Saint Etheldera, was burnt alive by the pagan King Vermond; the fire was composed partly of the wood of the true cross, brought to Copenhagen by King Claus III., and taken from him by the King of Norway. Report says

that since then many efforts have been made to convert the tower into a chapel, but each cross which has been placed upon it has been consumed by fire from heaven."

At that moment a lurid flash lighted up the gulf, the hills, and the rocks, and disappeared before the travellers could see these objects clearly.

Instinctively they halted, and the lightning was followed by a tremendous peal of thunder, the echo of which was repeated from cloud to cloud in the heavens, and from rock to rock upon the earth.

Both men raised their eyes. All the stars had disappeared, the dense clouds were rolling rapidly one over the other, and were heaped up like a mountain over their heads. The mighty wind which was hurling these masses of vapour before it, had not yet sunk to the level of the trees, which as yet were not stirred by any breeze, and upon which not a single drop of rain had fallen. On high was heard a kind of dull moan, which, with the hoarse roar of the waves in the gulf, was the only sound that could be heard in the gloom of the night, rendered more terrible by the gathering darkness of the tempest.

This tumultuous silence was suddenly interrupted by a kind of roar, which made the elder of the travellers start with affright.

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed he, grasping the young man's arm. "Was it the laugh of the Storm Fiend or the voice of——"

Another flash of lightning and another tremendous peal of thunder cut short his words. The tempest at once commenced with fearful violence, as if it had waited for the signal. The travellers wrapped their cloaks round them to protect themselves from the rain, which fell in torrents, and the dust which was swept up in spiral curves from the still dry earth.

"Old man," said the younger traveller, "a flash has

just shown me the Tower of Vygla on our right. Let us leave the road, and seek shelter there."

"A shelter in the accursed tower!" cried the old man. "May Saint Hospice protect us! Think again young master, the tower is deserted."

"All the better, we shall not be kept waiting at the door."

"Think what cruelties have defiled it?"

"Well, it will be purified in affording us shelter. Follow me. I declare, in a night like this, I would seek shelter in a robber's cave."

Then he seized the old man's arm, and, in spite of his remonstrances, dragged him to the building, which the continued flashes of lightning showed them was close at hand.

As they came up to it the younger man perceived a light in one of the loop-holes.

"You see," said he, "that the tower is not deserted. Now you are more easy, I hope."

"Oh, Heavens, master, whither are you conducting me? St. Hospice would never forgive me for entering this devil's chapel."

They had by this time reached the foot of the tower, and the young man knocked boldly at a new door that had been placed in the ruined wall.

"Calm your fears, old man. Some pious hermit has purified this abode by taking up his residence in it."

"No," answered his companion, "I will not enter. I can answer for it that no holy hermit would live here. More likely one who wears the seven chains of Belzebub for a rosary."

The light from the loop-hole descended, and shone through the key-hole of the door.

"You are late, Nychol," cried a sharp voice. "The gallows was erected at mid-day, and it does not take

six hours to come from Skongen to Vyglå. Had you more work to do?"

This question was put as the fastenings of the door were being undone. The woman who threw it open, perceiving strangers in the place of the person she expected, uttered a cry of surprise and anger, and drew back a step.

The appearance of the woman was not in itself very reassuring. She was very tall, and her hand, raised high above her head, grasped an iron lamp, which lighted up her livid features. Her emaciated and angular figure somewhat resembled a skeleton, whilst from her hollow eyes darted sinister rays of light, like a funereal torch.

From the waist downwards she was clothed in a petticoat of scarlet serge, which was stained with patches of red of another colour; her withered bosom was partially covered with a man's vest of the same hue, the sleeves of which were cut off at the elbow. The wind, which rushed in through the open door, caused her grey hair to wave in confusion, and almost tore away the fillet of bark which confined it.

"Good woman," said the younger of the travellers, "the rain pours down in torrents. You have a shelter, and we have gold."

His companion plucked at his mantle, and murmured in a low voice:

"Oh, master, what are you saying? If this is not the house of the Fiend, it is the habitation of some bandit, and to speak of gold would be to destroy us instead of protecting us."

"Peace!" answered the young man, and, drawing a purse from his pocket, he showed the shining contents to his hostess, and repeated his request.

The latter, who had now recovered from her surprise, looked at the travellers with a fixed and haggard glance.

"Strangers," cried she, "your guardian angels must have abandoned you. What do you seek in the Accursed Tower? Strangers, it is not men who pointed out these ruins to you as a shelter, for they would have said: 'Better storm and tempest than the Tower of Vyglá.' The human being who enters here only does so because no other place is open to him. He leaves this solitude only for a crowd, and lives but for death. His name is cursed by mankind, he is the minister of their vengeance, and exists but by their crimes, and the vilest criminal in his last moment believes himself to be his superior. Strangers you must be, or your feet would never have attempted to cross this threshold. Trouble no more the wolf and his cubs. Regain the road, and, if you would not be shunned by your fellow men, never confess that your faces have been lighted by the lamp of the inhabitants of the Tower of Vyglá!"

With these words she advanced a step, and pointed out into the darkness.

The old man trembled in every limb, but the younger stood firm. Owing to the extreme volubility with which she spoke, he had hardly understood a word she said, and believed her to be insane; besides, he did not feel inclined to leave a shelter, as the rain continued to fall as heavily as ever.

"In faith, good hostess, you describe a singular personage, with whom I would not lose the opportunity of making acquaintance for a great deal."

"Acquaintance with him, young man, is soon made, and soon terminated. If your evil influence drives you to do so, go, murder a man, or mutilate a dead body!"

"Mutilate a dead body!" repeated the old man, trembling and hiding behind his companion.

"I do not care to try such means; they are rather

indirect ones. The shortest method appears to be to remain here. A man must be mad to continue his journey in such a night."

"But more mad to seek shelter in such a place," muttered the old man.

"Unhappy man!" cried the woman, "do not knock at the door of one who knows but how to open the gate of the tomb."

"Should the gate of the tomb open at the same time as your door, no one shall say that I did not dare to enter. My sword will guarantee me against all danger. Close the door, for the wind strikes cold, and take this gold."

"And what should I do with your gold? Precious in your hands, it will become vile dross in mine. But never mind, remain for the sake of your gold. It will guarantee you against the storms of heaven, but not against the contempt of man. Remain. You pay for hospitality at a higher rate than you would pay for murder. Wait for a moment here; give me the gold, for it is the first time that a man has entered here with his hands full of gold which has not been stained with blood."

Then, having placed her lamp on one side, she closed the door, and disappeared under a dark arch in which was a narrow staircase.

Whilst the old man trembled, and invoked without cessation the name of Saint Hospice, cursing with all his heart, but in suppressed tones, the imprudence of his young friend, the latter took up the light, and began to examine the circular chamber in which they found themselves. The first object that met his eyes made him start back, whilst the old man exclaimed:

"Great heavens, master, a gallows!"

It was, in fact, a tall gibbet fastened against the

wall, and reaching to the damp ceiling of the arched roof.

"Yes," said the younger traveller, "so it is, and here, in addition, are steel and wooden saws, fetters, iron collars; and here is a set of triangles, with iron pincers hung over it."

"Holy saints of Paradise, where are we?"

The traveller coolly continued his examination of the place.

"Here is a bundle of hempen cord; there are furnaces and boilers; this side of the wall is hung with tongs and skinning knives; here are whips, the lashes of which are tipped with steel balls; an axe, a mace——"

"Have we reached the Armoury of Hell?" cried the old man, terrified at the enumeration of so many lethal instruments.

"Here," continued the other one, "are syphons of copper, wheels with bronze teeth, a chest of long nails, a screw-jack. Old man, these are terrible ornaments, and I regret that my imprudence should have brought you to so dreadful a place."

"There is time yet—let us fly!" As he uttered these words, the old man seemed more dead than alive.

"Do not be alarmed; whatever the nature of the place, I am with you, and will defend you."

"A fine protector you are," muttered the elder traveller, whose respect for his comrade decreased as his terror became more intense; "a sabre of thirty inches against a thirty-foot gibbet!"

The tall woman reappeared, and, taking the lamp, made a sign to the travellers to follow her. Taking heed to their footing, they ascended a narrow, broken staircase formed in the thickness of the wall of the tower. As they passed the loophole the wind blew in gusts, threatening to extinguish the quivering flame

of the lamp, which their guide endeavoured to shield with her long, transparent hands. It was not without repeatedly tripping over loose stones, which the old man in his alarm took for human bones, that they reached the next floor of the tower, which was a circular apartment similar to the one beneath it. In the midst of it, according to the custom of the country, burnt a large fire, the smoke from which only partially escaped through a hole in the ceiling. A spit loaded with fresh meat turned before the fire. The old man turned from it in horror. "It was in that grate," said he, "that the limbs of a saint were burnt with the wood of the Blessed Cross."

A clumsy table stood a short distance from the fire. The hostess invited the travellers to be seated.

"Strangers," said she, placing the lamp upon the table, "the supper will soon be ready, and my husband will not tarry on the road, lest the Spirit of Midnight should carry him away as he wanders near this accursed spot."

Orderer (for the reader has no doubt guessed that the travellers were our hero and his guide, Benignus Spiagudry), now that his companion had laid aside his cloak, was able to examine the extraordinary costume in which he had thought fit to attire himself. The fugitive guardian had left his suit of reindeer leather in the Spladgest, and had donned a complete suit of black, formerly the property of a defunct grammarian, who had drowned himself because he could not explain why *Jupiter* gave *Jovis* in the genitive case. In the place of his shoes, ~~and~~ from the wood of the hazel tree, he had pulled on a pair of jack-boots, which had belonged to a postillion who had been killed by a fall from his horse, in the deep recesses of which his spindle-shanks would have been lost had he not taken the precaution to stuff them with ample handfuls of

hay. The wig of a young French dandy, who had been murdered by robbers at one of the gates of Drontheim, concealed his baldness, and fell gracefully over his round shoulders. A patch covered one eye, and, thanks to a pot of rouge which he had found in the pockets of an old maid who had died for love, his pale and hollow cheeks were clothed in unaccustomed colour, which the rain had communicated to his nose and chin. Before sitting down, he carefully placed under his seat his package, closely wrapped in his old cloak, and whilst the attention of his companion was rivetted upon him, his own seemed absorbed by the roast which their hostess was attending to, at which from time to time he cast looks of horror and disgust, whilst he muttered:

"Human flesh—*horrendas epulas!* Cannibals! Moloch's supper! *Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet!* Where are we? House of Atreus—Druidus—Irmensul—the fiend-destroyed Lycaon!"

After a searching glance, however, he appeared relieved, and exclaimed:

"I thank thee, Providence, there is a tail to the meat."

Orderer, who had watched him attentively, and by the expression of his face followed his train of thought, could not forbear exclaiming with a smile:

"There is nothing reassuring in a tail. It may be a leg of the devil."

Spiagudry did not hear this joke, his eyes were fixed upon a remote portion of the room. He trembled violently.

"Master; look there in that heap of straw—in the shadow!"

"Well?" asked Orderer.

"Three naked and motionless corpses—three children's bodies."

"Someone knocks at the door," exclaimed the woman who was crouching over the fire.

In fact, loud and continued knocking could be heard above the warfare of the elements.

"It is he at last! it is Nychol!" and seizing the lamp, the woman hastily descended the staircase.

Before the travellers had time to say a word to each other, they heard in the lower room a confused sound of voices, in the midst of which, uttered in a tone which made Spiagudry tremble, were these words:

"Silence, woman, we *will* stop here! You may as well strive to keep *us* out as the sound of thunder."

Spiagudry crept close to Ordener.

"Master," said he feebly, "woe to us!"

The sound of feet were heard upon the stairs, and two men in the costume of ecclesiastics entered the room, followed by the frightened hostess.

One of the men was tall, and wore the black coat and the closely-cut hair of a Lutheran minister; the other was much shorter, and was dressed in the frock of a hermit, knotted round his waist with a cord, the hood was drawn closely over his face, and only allowed his black beard to be seen, and his hands were entirely hidden by the long sleeves of his gown. At the appearance of the two priests, Spiagudry felt the panic that had seized him when he first heard a voice whose tones he fancied were not unknown to him, disappear.

"Fear nothing, madam," said the Lutheran minister. "Christian priests do good to those who injure them. Would they then injure those who do good to them? All we ask is a shelter from the storm." If my reverend brother here spoke harshly, he was in the wrong to forget those vows of moderation which we are commanded to observe. . Alas! there are times when the most holy forget themselves. I had missed the road from Skongen to Drontheim, and was wandering about

without a guide, or without a shelter in the tempest. My reverend brother, also at a distance from his dwelling, met me, and conducted me hither. He told me of your hospitality, and no doubt he has not deceived himself or me. Do not then say like the bad shepherd: '*Advena, cur intras?*' Receive us, worthy hostess, and God will save your crops from the storm; God will find a shelter in time of tempest for your cattle, as you have sheltered the wandering travellers."

"Old man," cried the angry woman, "I have neither cattle nor crops."

"Well, then, if you are poor, heaven will bless you before your richer brethren. You and your husband will grow old having the respect of all, not for your wealth, but for your virtues. Your children will grow up esteemed by their fellows, and will become what their father was before them."

"Silence!" cried their hostess. "It is in remaining as we are that our children will grow up like their father, covered with the contempt of the world, which has been heaped upon us from generation to generation. Your blessing has turned to a curse upon our heads."

"Oh, heavens! exclaimed the minister, "who are you then, and in what criminal occupations do you pass your lives?"

"What is crime, and what is virtue? We are a privileged race, and can have no virtues, nor can we commit crimes."

"Her brain wanders," said the minister, turning towards the hermit, who was drying his gown, made of coarse cloth, at the fire.

"No, priest," answered the woman, "you do not know where you are. I am not mad, and I would rather inspire horror than excite pity. I am not mad, but I am the wife of——"

A violent knocking at the door of the tower prevented

Ordener and Spiagudry, who had been listening attentively, from hearing the conclusion of this speech.

"May a curse light on the High Sheriff of Skongen!" exclaimed the woman in red, "for assigning us a dwelling so near to the high road. Perhaps, after all, this may not yet be Nychol."

Nevertheless, she took up the lamp.

"It does not signify even if it is another wayfarer; the brook can flow where the torrent has passed."

The four travellers remained looking at each other by the light of the fire. Spiagudry, who had at first been alarmed at the voice of the hermit, and had been reassured by the sight of his black beard, would perhaps have had his terror excited again had he seen what a burning glance the holy man fixed upon him.

At length the Lutheran minister broke the silence.

"Brother Hermit, for you are, I suppose, one of those Catholic priests who have escaped the last persecution, can you tell me where we are?"

The door from the broken staircase was thrown open before the hermit could reply.

"And so you see, woman, when a storm comes it brings a crowd of travellers, who are willing enough to sit at our despised table and to shelter under our accursed roof."

"Nychol," answered the woman, "I could not prevent——"

"But what care I how many guests I have, so long as they pay? Gold is equally good, whether gained by lodging a wayfarer or by hanging a thief."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEADSMAN OF THE DRONTHEIMHUIS.

THE man who had uttered these words stopped in the doorway, and gave the travellers the opportunity of examining him at their ease. He was of gigantic form, and dressed like the hostess, in red serge. His enormous head seemed to be placed directly upon his massive shoulders without the interposition of any neck. He had a low forehead, flat nose, thick eyebrows, and his eyes, which blazed with a blood-red light, had a purple line underneath them. The chin and upper lip were completely shaved, and disclosed a wide mouth which, with its thick black lips, looked like an incurable sore, two tufts of curling hair covered his cheeks, and extended to the bottom of his face. He wore a felt hat, dripping with rain, which he had not had the courtesy to raise as he entered the room.

On perceiving him Benignus Spiagudry uttered a cry of terror, whilst the Lutheran minister turned from him with a look of surprise and horror, and the master of the house, who had evidently recognised him at once, spoke: "What, you here, your reverence? By my faith, I did not expect, after our day's amusement, to see your frightened face and piteous mien so soon again."

The minister restrained his feelings of repugnance, whilst his features assumed a grave and serene air.

"And I, my son, bless the chance that has brought

the shepherd to the stray sheep, who will no doubt now listen to the voice of the pastor."

"Now, by Haman's gallows," exclaimed the other, with a strident laugh, "this is the first time that I have heard myself compared to a sheep. Believe me, your reverence, if you want to flatter the vulture do not call him a pigeon."

"He by whose grace the vulture becomes a dove does not flatter—he consoles. You think that I fear you, whilst I only pity you."

"You must have a large amount of pity. I should have thought that you had exhausted your stock of it to-day upon that poor devil to whom you showed your cross to hide my gibbet."

"That unfortunate man was less to be pitied than you, for he wept whilst you laughed. Happy the man who in his last moments remembers that the word of God is more powerful than the arm of man."

"Well said, reverend sir," exclaimed the master of the tower, with a gleam of terrible and sardonic gaiety. "Happy the man who weeps. Besides, our friend of to-day had committed no greater crime than that of loving His Majesty the King so much that he could not live without putting his face upon pieces of copper, which he gilded artistically to render them more worthy of the royal portrait. Our gracious monarch did not show himself ungrateful, and in recompense for so much love caused him to be invested with a fine hempen collar, which, as an example to his friends, was conferred upon him in the public square of Skongen this very day, by me, Grand Chancellor of the Order of the Gibbet, assisted by you, the Grand Chaplain of the same order."

"Stay, unhappy man! Can it be that he who punishes can forget what punishment is for? Listen to the thunder?"

"Well, and what is thunder?—a peal of laughter from Satan!"

"Oh, heavens! he has just been one of the chief actors in an execution, and he blasphemous."

"A truce to your sermons, you prater!" cried the host in a voice of thunder. "Unless you wish to curse the Angel of Darkness, who, twice in twelve hours has brought us together—once in the cart and once beneath this roof—imitate, if you can, your comrade the hermit, who says nothing, so anxious is he to return to his cave at Lynraas. Accept my thanks, friend hermit, for the blessing which I see you give each morning to the Tower of Vyglá from your post on the hill. By my faith, until now I thought you taller, and I had fancied that your beard was white, not black. You are, are you not, the Hermit of Lynraas, the only remaining hermit of the Drontheimhuus?"

"Yes, I am the only remaining hermit," was the reply, in a muffled voice.

"We are, then," retorted the host, "the two solitaries of the province. Ho, Bechlie! get on with that leg of lamb, for I have an appetite. I was detained in the village of Burlock, by that infernal Doctor Mauryll, who only wanted to pay me twelve ascalins for a body, whilst that scoundrel of a guardian of the Spladgest at Drontheim gets forty. Hulloo! you sir with the wig, what has happened to you—are you going to fall backwards? By the way, Bechlie, is the skeleton of the poisoner Orgivius, the celebrated sorcerer, finished yet; it is wanted for the Museum at Berghen. And have you sent one of your cubs to the Syndic of Lævig to ask for what he owes me, four double crowns for having boiled to death a wizard and two alchemists; twenty ascalins for taking down from the gibbet the Jew Ishmael Tryphain, on the complaint of the bishop, and one

crown for putting a new wooden arm to the stone gallows belonging to the town."

"The money," answered the woman in a querulous voice, "remained in the hands of the Syndic, because your son had forgotten to take with him the wooden spoon in which to receive it, and no servant of the judge would put it into his hand."

"May their necks come under my grip one day, and they shall see if I want a wooden spoon to touch them with! But still we must keep in with the Syndic, for was it not he who dismissed the petition of Ivar the Robber, who complained that I, and not the sworn tormentor, had given him the question, and that as he had not been *convicted* he had not become *infamous*? Remember, wife, to prevent the children from playing with my nippers and pincers; they are all out of order, so much so that I was unable to use them to-day. Where are the little monsters?" he added, approaching the heap of straw, upon which Spiagudry had fancied that he had seen three dead bodies; "they sleep through all this noise as if they had been just taken off the gallows."

As soon as Spiagudry had caught sight of the speaker, he had recognised him, having often seen him enact one of his terrible dramas in the Square of Drontheim, and now he almost fainted when he recollected the personal motive that he had for fearing so terrible a personage. He put his mouth to Ordener's ear, and hissed: "*He is Nychol Orugix, the Headsman of the Drontheimhuus!*"

Ordener was at first horrified, and regretted that he had been induced to take refuge from the storm; but soon a sentiment of curiosity was aroused within him, and he began to pay the greatest attention to the manners and words of this singular being, as one listens to the roar of the tiger, and the howl of the

hyena, when they are brought captives into the streets of our cities.

The hostess now put a large earthenware dish, containing the leg of lamb, upon the table. The executioner took his seat facing Ordener and Spiagudry, and between the two priests, whilst his wife, after placing a jug of beer sweetened with honey, a piece of rye bread and five wooden platters upon the board, took her seat by the fire, and occupied herself in repairing the notches in her husband's pincers.

"Reverend sir," said the hangman, "the sheep offers you a portion of lamb. And you, Sir Knight of the Wig, is it the wind that brings your hair all over your face?"

"The wind—master—the storm," stammered the terror-stricken Spiagudry.

"Come, pluck up courage, old one. You see the holy priests and I are good friends. Tell us who you and your silent young friend are? Talk a bit, man, for if your speech is anything like your appearance it will be comical enough."

"You are joking, master," answered the guardian, contracting his lips, grinning, and winking his eye so as to appear to be laughing. "I am only a poor old——"

"Yes, yes," cried the jovial headsman, "some old wizard."

"Oh, no, master. I am a scholar, not a wizard."

"All the worse. A wizard would complete our merry *Sanhedrim*. My guests, let us drink, so as to restore to the old scholar the gift of speech, that he may enliven our supper. To the health of the man I hung to-day, reverend sir! What, brother hermit, do you refuse my beer?"

In fact the hermit had drawn from beneath his frock

a large gourd full of clear water, with which he filled his glass.

"Hermit of Lynraas," cried the headsman, "if you will not drink my beer, I will taste what it is that you prefer to it."

"Be it so," answered the hermit.

"Take off your glove then, reverend brother. You must pour out drink with a bare hand."

The hermit made a sign of negation.

"I am bound by a vow," said he.

"Never mind, pour away," cried the executioner.

Scarcely had Orugix touched the cup with his lips, than he thrust it violently from him, whilst the hermit emptied his at a draught.

"By the cup of Pluto, good hermit, what abomination is that? I have never drank anything like it since the day when I was nearly drowned sailing from Copenhagen to Drontheim. That is not water from the Lynraas, but from the deep sea itself."

"Sea water," munnured Spiagudry, terrified at this as well as at the sight of the hermit's gloves.

"Well, old friend," cried the hangman, turning towards him, "everything seems to alarm you here, even to the drink which a worthy saint takes to mortify the flesh."

"Alas! no, master; but sea-water, there is only one man——"

"Come, you do not know what you are saying, doctor. Either your terror comes from a guilty conscience, or you despise the table at which you are sitting."

These words were pronounced in rather an angry tone of voice, and at once showed Spiagudry the necessity of dissimulating his terrors, and caused him to call up the small amount of presence of mind that remained to him.

"Contempt! Contempt for you, master—for you, whose presence in a province gives it the *merum imperium*, the right of blood, as the vulgar have it; for you, the master of high justice, the executor of the secular arm, the shield of innocence; for you, whom Aristotle, in book six, chapter the last on *Politics*, terms a *magistrate*, and whom Paris of Puteo, in his work *de Syndico*, fixes the emoluments at six crowns of gold, *quinque aureas manivolto*; for you, sir, whose brother headsman at Cronstadt can demand a patent of nobility after severing three hundred heads; for you, whose terrible but honourable functions are filled in Franconia by the youngest married man, at Reutlinger by the junior counsellor, and at Sledien by the citizen who has last quitted his apprenticeship? And do I not know, master, that in France your brethren have the right of *Havadime* on each inmate of the Hospital of Saint Ladre, and over pigs and cakes on the eve of the Epiphany? How should I not have the most profound respect for you, when the Abbot of St. Germain-des-Prés gives you each year a pig's head on the feast of St. Vincent, with which you march at the head of the procession——"

Here the erudite dissertation of the guardian was cut short by the hangman:

"By my faith, this is the first time that I have heard of this. The learned abbot whom you speak of has, up till now, defrauded me of all these fine privileges of which you speak in so enticing a manner. Strangers," continued Orugif, "without paying attention to the discourse of this old babbler, it is certain that my career was blighted at the very outset. What am I to-day? The humble executioner of a paltry province. Why, I might have been in as good a position as Stillison Dickoy, the famous headsman of Moscow. You may

believe it or not, but twenty-four years ago I received the order to behead Schumacher."

"Schumacher, the Count of Griffenfeld!" exclaimed Ordener.

"Ah, have I made the dumb speak at last? Yes, the same Schumacher, whom chance may once more place in my hands, if the king should revoke his reprieve. Let us empty the pitcher, and I will tell you how the thing happened; how I made such a splendid entrance into my profession, and how miserably I failed. I was in 1676 the assistant of Rhum Stuald, the royal headsman of Copenhagen, at the time of the condemnation of the Count of Griffenfeld; my master had fallen sick, and I was, thanks to some slight influence that I possessed, chosen to replace him in this important duty. On the 5th of June (I shall never forget the date), at five o'clock in the morning, assisted by the carpenter of the scaffolds, I had everything ready in the square of the citadel; all the wood-work was draped with black out of respect for the rank of the criminal. Who, in my place, would not have been intoxicated with his position? At eight o'clock the king's guard surrounded the scaffold, whilst the hussars of Sleswig kept back the crowd. I stood on the platform leaning upon my two-handed sword.

"Every eye was fixed upon me, and at that moment I was the most important personage in the two kingdoms. 'My fortune is made,' thought I; 'for without me what could all these noble lords do, who have vowed the destruction of the chancellor?' I saw myself already the titular royal executioner, with assistants and privileges of all kinds.

"Listen; the great bell struck ten, the condemned man left his prison, crossed the square, and ascended the scaffold with a firm step and a tranquil air. I advanced to bind back his long hair, but he performed

that duty for himself. 'For a long time,' said he with a smile, to the prior of St. Andrew, 'I have been my own valet.'

"I was about to bind his eyes with the black bandage, but he declined to submit. 'My friend,' said he, 'this is, perhaps, the first time that only a foot separates the highest and the lowest officers of the secular arm—the chancellor and the headsman.'

"These words have remained engraven on my memory. He refused the black cushion that I offered to him for his knees, embraced his confessor, and knelt down, saying in a firm voice, 'I die innocent.' Then, with a blow of a mace, I shattered the shield of his armorial bearings, exclaiming, according to custom, 'This is not done without good reason.'

"This insult shook the firmness of the count; he grew pale, but speedily recovered himself. 'The king gave them to me, the king has a right to resume them,' said he. I placed his head upon the block, his eyes turned towards the east; I raised my sword—Listen—suddenly a cry arose: 'A pardon, in the name of the king, a pardon for Schumacher!' I turned round, there was an aide-de-camp pressing through the crowd, waving a parchment. The culprit rose, the parchment was handed to him.

"'What,' cried he, 'imprisonment for life!—then mercy is harder to bear than death!' and crest-fallen he descended from the scaffold, which he had mounted with so calm a bearing. For myself, I felt that all was lost, the safety of the man meant my fall.

"After taking down the scaffold I returned to my master, and remember that I felt vexed at losing my fee of a gold crown. The next day I received my commission as headsman of the Drontheimhuus; headsman of the most out-of-the-way province of Norway. 'Little matters bring about great events;

the enemies of the count, wishing to have the appearance of clemency, had made every arrangement for the reprieve to arrive *after* the execution had taken place. They blamed my slowness, as if the executioner who beheads a Grand Chancellor can go to work with the same speed that he would hang a Jew. Besides, I had influence against me. I had a brother; I even believe that I have one now, though he has changed his name; he managed to get into the service of the Count d'Ahlefeld, and my inopportune presence at Copenhagen annoyed him, and so he was anxious to get me out of the way; never mind, perhaps I shall hang him some day."

The hangman paused for a moment, and then continued:

"You see, my dear guests, that I have submitted to my fate, and flung ambition aside. I exercise my business here quietly enough. I sell bodies and skeletons, which are bought by the School of Anatomy at Berghen. I laugh at everything; even at this woman; she was a gipsy, but solitude has driven her mad; my three sons grow up fearing the devil and the gallows; my name is hated and dreaded throughout the Drontheimhuus. The syndics furnish me with a cart, and my red clothes, and the Tower of Vygla keeps out the rain as well as the Bishop's Palace. Old priests whom the storm compels to seek the shelter of my roof, preach at me, and scholars flatter me. To sum up, I am as happy as another; I eat, I hang, and I sleep."

"Miserable man," exclaimed the priest, "he kills, and he sleeps!"

"He who is miserable is happy," said the hermit.

"Yes, hermit," said the executioner; "miserable as you are, but how much more happy; for my business would be a good one, if people did not interfere with

it. Do you know that the newly-appointed chaplain of Drontheim, upon the pretext that a certain illustrious marriage is about to take place, has petitioned for the pardon of twelve criminals who belong to me."

"Who belong to you?" exclaimed the minister.

"Certainly, reverend sir. Seven of them are to be flogged, two branded on the left cheek, and three to be hung. That makes twelve, does it not? Yes, twelve crowns and thirty ascalins I shall lose if his petition is granted. What do you think of such interference? This confounded priest's name is Athanasius Munder. Oh, if I could get hold of him."

The Lutheran minister rose from his seat, and in a calm voice said:

"My son, I am Athanasius Munder."

At this declaration anger flashed from the eyes of Orugix, and he started to his feet, but as he met the calm and noble glance of the minister, his eyes fell, and he sat down silent and confused.

Ordener, who had likewise risen from his seat to defend the minister if necessary, then spoke:

"Nychol Orugix," said he, "here are thirteen crowns to indemnify you for the loss that you will sustain when these men are pardoned.

"Alas," replied the minister. "Who knows if I shall obtain their grace? I must speak to the son of the viceroy, for all depends upon his marriage with the daughter of the chancellor."

"Chaplain," answered the young man in a firm voice, "you will obtain it, for Ordener Guldenlew will not place the nuptial-ring upon his bride's finger until the chains of your prisoners shall be removed."

"Young stranger, you promise I fear more than you can perform, but Heaven will recompense you for your generosity."

Ordener's thirteen crowns had finished what the look of the priest had commenced, and Nychol had resumed all his gaiety.

"Good chaplain," said he, "you are a brave man and worthy of a place in the Chapel of Saint Hilarion. You walk straight in your own path, and you cannot help it if it crosses mine; but the man I do want to lay my fingers on is the guardian of the dead-house at Drontheim, that old magician—that porter of the Spladgest. What is his name—Spluijoy—Spadugy—tell me learned doctor, you who are so full of knowledge, can you not assist me in recollecting the name of this sorcerer; he is something in your line, you know, and I daresay you have often ridden with him to your devil's meetings astride on a broomstick?"

But poor Spiagudry was entirely dumbfounded, and could not find a word.

"Well," repeated the hangman, "cannot you tell me his name? Does your wig make you deaf?"

"A little, master, a little. But as for his name I do not know it, I swear to you——"

"Even if he does not know it, he is wrong to swear," said the voice of the hermit. "The name is Benignus Spiagudry."

"I! I! Great Heavens!" cried the old man in terror.

The executioner burst into a laugh.

"Who is talking about you?—it is that infidel of the dead-house that we are speaking of. Why you are frightened at nothing, you would be an amusing fellow to hang. And so you do not know Benignus Spiagudry?"

"No, master, no," answered Spiagudry, a little reassured at finding that he was unknown, "and since he has offended you, I should be sorry to make his acquaintance."

"And you, friend hermit, do you know him?"

"Oh, yes," returned the holy man, "I know him, he is tall, thin and bald."

Spiagudry hurriedly readjusted his wig.

"He has," continued the hermit, "fingers as long as those of a robber who has not met a traveller for a week, he stoops very much."

Spiagudry drew himself up.

"In short you might take him for one of the bodies of which he has charge, if it were not for his brilliant eyes."

Spiagudry felt if his patch were secure.

"Thanks, father hermit," said the hangman, "whenever I meet him now I shall recognise the old Jew."

Spiagudry, who was a good Christian, was shocked at this libel.

"Jew, master!" he exclaimed, and then stopped short, fearing to have said too much.

"Jew or infidel, what matters it. At any rate they say that he has a knowledge of the black art."

"I could believe it," said the hermit, with a cruel smile, which his hood could not entirely hide, "if he were not such a coward, but he would never dare to have dealings with Satan. When he is once overtaken by terror, he hardly knows what he does."

"I am sorry to hear that he is a coward," replied Orugix, "he is hardly worth the pain of being hated; you fight a serpent, but you crush a lizard."

Spiagudry hazarded a few words in his own defence.

"But are you sure that the municipal officer of whom you are speaking is what you say—his reputation for instance?"

"The worst in the province," returned the hermit.

Disappointed in this quarter, Benignus turned to the executioner.

"What wrongs have you to reproach him with?"

"Plenty," was the reply; "his business is something like mine, and therefore he injures me."

"Oh, master, how can that be? He cannot have seen you, as I have, surrounded by your wife, and your charming family, nor can he have partaken of your hospitality; had he done so he could never have been an enemy.

Spiagudry had hardly finished this soothing speech, than the woman, who up to this time had kept silence, exclaimed in bitter accents:

"The sting of the viper is never more deadly than when it is dipped in honey."

"The woman is mad," said the guardian of the dead to himself, disgusted at the utter failure of his flattering words.

"Bechlie is right, doctor," cried the hangman. "I shall consider that you are a viper if you continue to justify this Spiagudry."

"I do not attempt to justify him, but——"

"I am glad to hear it, for you do not know the height of his impudence. Will you believe me when I tell you that he has dared to dispute my proprietary rights in Han of Iceland?"

"Han of Iceland?" repeated the hermit.

"Yes, you have heard of the famous robber?"

"I have," answered the hermit.

"Well, every robber belongs to the hangman; what does this infamous Spiagudry do, but petition that they should put a price upon the head of Han?"

"He petitioned for a reward to be put on Han's head?" asked the hermit.

"He had that audacity—only, of course, for the sake——"

of securing his body—and so I should be robbed of my rights.”

“It is scandalous, Master Orugix, that your just privileges should be disputed.”

These words were accompanied by a malicious smile, that made Spiagudry tremble.

“The execution of Han would bring me once more before the public, and who knows what might come of it?”

“No one, indeed, Master Nychol.”

“On the day of his arrest come to me, brother hermit, and we will kill a fat porker, in honour of the occasion.”

“Willingly, but I may not be free on that day, besides, you said just now that you had cast aside ambition.

“Yes, yes; and it is sufficient to destroy all my hopes, this petition of Spiagudry.”

“All,” answered the hermit in a significant voice; “we must not forget Spiagudry’s petition.”

The voice of the hermit fascinated Spiagudry, as the eye of the snake charms the bird.

“But why judge him without proofs? Perhaps this is only a rumour, after all.”

“A rumour!” said Orugix, “the thing is certain; the document signed by Spiagudry, and countersigned by the Syndic, is now before the Governor of Drontheim.”

The executioner was so well informed, that Spiagudry felt it was useless to say more; so he remained silent, until the voice of the hermit asked—“Master Nychol, what is the punishment for sacrilege?”

These words struck horror into Spiagudry’s heart; and he listened with eagerness to the reply of Orugix, who delayed answering until he had emptied his glass.

"It depends entirely upon the nature of the sacrifice," said he at length.

"Suppose it consisted in the mutilation of the dead?"

"Formerly," answered Orugix coldly, "they buried the criminal alive with the body; now, the punishment is of a milder kind."

"What do you call a milder kind?" asked Spiagudry, who could scarcely breathe.

"Why," replied the executioner, with the self-satisfied air of one who is entirely at home in his subject, "they brand an S with a red-hot iron in the fleshy part of the leg——"

"And then?" interrupted the guardian, upon whom it would have been almost impossible to execute the first part of this sentence.

"Then they simply hang him," answered Orugix.

"Hang him! Oh, what cruelty."

"Why do you look at me so? You seem as if you were afraid of the same fate."

"Well," said the hermit, "I am pleased to hear that in this punishment the voice of humanity has not appealed in vain."

At this instant the storm lulled, and the sound of a horn was distinctly heard.

"Nychol," said the woman, "they are in pursuit of some criminal—that was the horn of the archers."

"The horn of the archers!" repeated all the guests, in different accents; but, in Spiagudry's case, in extreme terror.

At that moment a fresh and violent knocking was heard at the door.

CHAPTER XIV.

A CONSPIRATOR AND HIS TOOL.

LOEWIG is a large town, situated on the northern coast of the Gulf of Drontheim, and backed by a chain of hills, scantily cultivated, and stretching away in variegated mosaics to the horizon. The town has a dull appearance; the fisherman's cabin, built of wood and reeds; the conical huts of earth and flint, where the miner, who has made enough to cease from his toil, retires to pass his old age; the frame-work dwelling of the chamois hunter, which, upon his return from the chase, he makes habitable by a thatched roof, and forms the walls of the skins of the animals he has slain in the chase, line the streets, which from their curves and windings, far exceed the length of the town itself. In one part of the town, where nothing is now to be seen but a few remains of an ancient tower, was a fortified house, built by Horda the Archer, Lord of Loewig, and brother in arms of the pagan king Halfdan, occupied by the Syndic of the town.

On the morning of the same day upon which Ordener had arrived at Drontheim, a person who kept himself in strict seclusion, had arrived at Loewig. His gilded litter, though no arms were visible upon it, and his four tall lackeys, armed to the teeth, made him at once a topic of conversation for all the idlers of the place.

The host of the "Golden Gull," the little tavern at which the traveller had alighted, assumed a mysterious

air, and answered all questions with a "*I do not know,*" which might have been interpreted, "*I know all, but will tell nothing.*"

The tall lackeys were as mute as fishes, and kept matters as dark as the shaft of a mine.

The Syndic at first shut himself up in his tower, and awaited a visit from the stranger; but soon the inhabitants perceived, with astonishment, that shortly afterwards he twice called fruitlessly at the "Golden Gull," and made a low bow to the stranger, when he by chance saw him at an open window. The gossips therefore supposed that the visitor had made known his rank to the Syndic; but they were wrong in their conjectures. A messenger, sent by the stranger, had called at the Syndic's with a free pass for the bearer and his suite, requesting him to affix his signature to it; and he, perceiving that the green wax with which the packet was sealed, bore two hands of justice crossed, sustaining a mantle of ermine, with the coronet of a Count surmounting a shield, around which were the collars of the orders of the Elephant and the Daunebrog, had determined to pay his respects to the illustrious stranger in person; for he was anxious to obtain the post of High Sheriff of the Drontheimhuus, and was determined to leave no step unturned to obtain influential patrons.

But it was of no avail; for the illustrious unknown would receive no one.

On the second day after the arrival of the traveller, the host presented himself to him, and informed him that the messenger expected by *His Courtesy*, had arrived.

"Let him come up, then," replied *His Courtesy*.

A moment afterwards and the messenger entered the room, and, bowing nearly to the ground, awaited in silence until he should be addressed.

"I expected you this morning. What has detained you?"

"The interests of your grace. Have I any other care?"

"What are Elphège and Frederic doing?"

"They are well, and——"

"That will do," interrupted his master. "Have you nothing of more interest to impart to me? Is there anything new at Drontheim?"

"Nothing, except that the Baron of Thorwick arrived there yesterday."

"Yes, I know that he wished to consult that old Mecklenberger, Levin de Knud, about the proposed marriage. Do you know what was the result of his interview with the Governor?"

"Yesterday, at twelve o'clock, when I left, he had not yet seen the general."

"What! though he had arrived the evening before? Had he seen the countess? You astonish me, Musdæmon."

"No, he had not seen her either."

"Then if no one had seen him, how did they know that he had arrived at Drontheim?"

"From his servant, who dismounted yesterday at the governor's palace."

"But where did he dismount, then?"

"His servant asserted that he set off in a boat for Munkholm, after having entered the Spladgest."

"For Munkholm! For the Prison of Schumacher! Are you certain? I always thought that that strictly honest Levin was a traitor. Munkholm! what upon earth could take him there? Did he go to consult Schumacher? Did he go to——"

"Noble lord," interrupted Musdæmon, "it is not certain that he went there at all."

"How? What did you say just now? You are mocking me."

"Pardon, your grace, I repeat to you what the servant of the baron said. But Lord Frederic, who was yesterday on guard in the fortress, asserts that he did not see the Baron Ordener."

"A fine proof that he was not there. Why, my son does not know him by sight. He might easily besides have entered in disguise."

"Yes, my lord, but Lord Frederic denies that anyone at all entered."

The count grew calmer.

"That is different," said he. "And my son asserts this, does he?"

"He asserted it three different times, and the interests of the Lord Frederic are the same as those of your grace."

This remark entirely allayed the count's anxiety.

"Ah, I understand it," said he. "The baron on arriving wished for a sail on the Gulf, and this servant jumped to the conclusion that he had gone to Munkholm. Why should he go there? I was very foolish to let the thought cause me uneasiness for a moment. This carelessness, too, about seeing old Levin, proves that my son-in-law that is to be, has not such a partiality for him as I feared he had. Will you believe me, my dear Musdemon, when I tell you that I had imagined that Ordener had fallen in love with Ethel Schumacher, and had built up quite a romance upon this trip to Munkholm. But thank heaven, Ordener is not so foolish as I am. But talking of this Danae, how does Frederic get on with her?"

Musdemon had had the same feelings of uneasiness as his master regarding Ethel Schumacher, and had struggled with them, but without being able to overthrow them so easily. However, delighted to see his master smile, he took good care not to disturb his

peace of mind, but sought, on the contrary, to increase the good-temper which is so rarely displayed by patrons to their favourites.

"Noble count, your son has failed with the daughter of Schumacher, but it appears that another has been more fortunate."

The count interrupted him with vivacity.

"Another! What other?"

"That I do not know. Some serf, peasant or vassal!"

"Is this a fact?" asked the count, whose gloomy face lightened up at this intelligence.

"Lord Frederic asserts it for a fact."

The count rose from his seat, and walked about the room, rubbing his hands.

"Muscæmon, my dear Muscæmon, yet another effort and we arrive at the end of our toils. The shoot of the tree is withered, we have but to overthrow the trunk. Have you any other news?"

"Dispolсен has been murdered!"

The features of the count expressed the greatest relief.

"Alas! you see we are getting along famously. Did they find any papers on him, and where is the iron casket?"

"I am sorry to say, your grace, that none of our people had a hand in it. He was murdered and robbed on the Sands of Ureltal, and the assassination is attributed to Han of Iceland."

"Han of Iceland!" replied his master, whose countenance fell as he heard this news. "That notorious brigand that we wish to place at the head of the insurgent miners?"

"The same, noble count, and I fear, from what I have heard, that we shall have great difficulty in finding him. However, I am provided with a man

who, if need be, will assume his name. He is a savage mountaineer, tall and strong as an oak, and hold and cunning as the wolf of the mountain. It is impossible that so formidable a giant does not resemble Han of Iceland."

"This Han, then is of lofty stature?"

"So the popular report runs, your grace."

"You know, my dear Mnsdæmon, that I always admire the skill with which you lay your plans. When does the insurrection burst forth?"

"At any moment, your grace. The king's tax has for a long time been a burden to the miners, and they will seize with joy an opportunity of casting it off. The rising will begin at Guldbranshal, will spread to Sund-Moer, and from thence reach Kongsberg. In three days two thousand miners will join the standard of revolt, whilst the name of Schumacner will be their watchword, for it has been used freely by our emissaries. The reserve forces in the south, and the garrisons of Drontheim and Skongen, will easily suffice to crush the insurrection, and the king will be grateful to you for this new service that you will have rendered him, and you will be at the same time freed from Schumacher, whose very existence is a constant source of danger. You see upon what a firm base the whole structure is raised, while it is to be completed by the marriage of Ulrica and the Baron of Thorwick."

The private conversation of two men like these is never a long one, because in each of them there is just enough of manhood left to recoil from each other's villainy. When two corrupted minds are laid bare before each other, their natures revolt at the hideous spectacle. Crime is a source of horror to crime, and when they speak to one another of their crimes, their passions and their interest, the soul of each is as a mirror to his accomplice, and shows him all the

blackness and perfidy of his own nature. However secret their interview may be, there are always two witnesses—God and Conscience!

The count hated these interviews with Musdæmon because the latter laid everything bare before him, and did not spare him the sight of a single link in the chain of crime which was forged to bind together events which would lead to fame and fortune. Many flatterers think it well to spare their masters the terrible details, so as to allow them to take credit to themselves for an ignorance which they do not really possess. Musdæmon, however, acted in exactly a contrary manner. He rarely conciliated his master, though he always obeyed him. He knew the inmost depths of his master's soul, as the count was acquainted with those of his, and so he never compromised himself without leading his master in the same path. Of all heads that the count would have been most pleased to see full upon the scaffold after Schumacher's was that of his wily accomplice, whom he looked upon as a dangerous tool; and Musdæmon knew this well.

The count had obtained all the intelligence that he wished. He was satisfied, and it only remained for him to dismiss Musdæmon.

"You have," said he, with a gracious smile, "been, as you ever have been, the most faithful of servants. All is going well, chiefly owing to your care and skill. I appoint you, in return, chief private secretary of the Grand Chancery division."

Musdæmon bowed profoundly.

"That is not all," continued the count. "I am going, for the third time, to ask for the Order of the Dannebrog for you, but I am afraid that your low birth, and the infamous position of your relative——"

Musdæmon grew red and pale alternately, and hid his change of countenance under another profound bow.

"Go, then," said the count, extending his hand for him to kiss; "go, Master Private Secretary, and write out your petition. Perhaps, this time, we may find the king in a good temper, and then matters can be arranged."

"Whether His Majesty confers the decoration on me or not, I shall always be grateful for your grace's bounties."

"Hasten then, for I wish to leave. You must try and get more information concerning Han of Iceland."

As Musdæmon, after a third bow, half opened the door, the count stopped him.

"I was forgetting," said he. "In your new position as private secretary you will write to the office of the Grand Chancellor, requesting that the Syndic of Løwig be discharged from his post, for compromising his position by cringing before strangers, with whose rank he is unacquainted."



CHAPTER XV.

THE ROBBER'S SAFE CONDUCT.

“**Y**ES, master; we certainly ought to make a pilgrimage to the Grotto of Lynraas. Who would have believed that that hermit, whom in my heart I was cursing just before as a malignant demon, would have turned out to be our guardian angel, and that the lance which seemed to threaten our lives would have served us as a bridge by means of which we crossed the precipice?”

It was in a flood of these exaggerated words that Benignus Spiagudry expressed to Ordener his joy and gratitude for the conduct of the mysterious hermit.

Our travellers had now progressed some distance from the Tower of Vygla, and were with difficulty following a mountainous road cut up by pools of water and blocked by masses of rock, which the torrents that had flowed down the hill sides had brought with them. The day had not yet dawned, and the bushes which crowned the rocks that rose on each side of the road looked like dark objects cut out by the hand against the sky, which was assuming a greyish tinge.

Ordener was silent. For some time he had been abandoning himself to that semi-sleep which the mechanical movement of the pedestrian permits him to indulge in. He had not slept since the evening before, when he had taken a few hours of repose after his visit to the Spladgest, in a fisherman's barque, which was

moored to the quay. And now, whilst his corporeal body was journeying towards Skongen, his soul had fled to the Gulf of Drontheim—towards those gloomy towers in which was the being on whom alone his hopes of happiness rested.

Whilst awake, the remembrance of Ethel ruled all his thoughts. In slumber, the thought of her came like a fantastic image to gladden his dreams.

In the second life of sleep, when the spirit lives for a time unhampered by the body, and when physical life, with all its troubles, appears to have fled, he seemed to see the virgin object of his love, not more beautiful, not more pure, but freer, happier and more entirely his. But upon the road to Skongen, the sweet oblivion of the inner world could not keep him continually enchained, for every now and then a quagmire, a rock or the branch of a tree, would recall him roughly to the realities of life. Then he would rouse himself, half open his wearied eyes, and regret that he had fallen from a heavenly journey to a commonplace tramp over miserable roads, where there was nothing to recompense him for his toils, except the knowledge that the tress of Ethel's hair rested upon his heart, and assured him that she was still his.

"Master," cried Spiagudry in a loud voice, which, coupled with a stumble over the trunk of a tree, roused Ordener from his reverie, "fear nothing, the archers have taken the road to the right, when, guided by the hermit, they left the tower, and we can converse without fear, though up to this time it has been wise to keep silence."

"In truth," said Ordener, yawning, "you push prudence rather far. It is three hours, at least, since we quitted the tower, and the archers——"

"That is true, master; but a little prudence hurts no one. Look you, suppose I had said that I was

Benignus Spiagudry, when the chief of that terrible band had asked for me in a voice that seemed like that of Saturn demanding his last-born child that he might devour it, what would have become of me if I had not used prudence then, noble master?"

"By my faith, old man, I do not think that they would have drawn your name from you with red-hot pincers."

"Was I wrong, master? The hermit (whom may Saint Hospice and Saint Usbald the Solitary bless) would not have had time to ask the chief of the archers if his escort was not composed of soldiers of the Munkholm regiment, a trivial question which was only put to gain time. Did you remark, sir, that after the reply in the affirmative by that dull-witted archer, with what a singular smile the hermit invited them to follow him, telling them that *he* could show them the place of concealment of the fugitive Benignus Spiagudry? Good and worthy anchorite," continued the guardian, after a short pause, "he practises the principles of Christian humanity and evangelical charity, and I who was at first alarmed by his appearance, not very reassuring, certainly, but it hid a good heart. Solitude, no doubt, has imparted that strange ring to his voice, for, master, I know another being who lives alone, a formidable creature" (here the voice of Benignus sank to a whisper), "who—but no, out of respect for the venerable Hermit of Lynraas, I will draw no odious comparison. His gloves, too—but there is nothing extraordinary, for many wear them because of the cold, and then the sea-water that he drank—well, Catholic recluses have often singular rules, as is shown in the verses of the celebrated Urensus, the Hermit of the Caucasus.

'Rivos despeciens maris undam potat amaram.'

"These lines came to my mind in that horrible Tower of Vyglā. Had I thought more deeply on the matter, I might have spared myself a great deal of alarm; but, then, who can collect his thoughts when seated at the hangman's board, a wretch devoted to general execration, who only differs from the assassin by the number of his murders, and the impunity with which he is permitted to commit them; a being who offers you food and drink with the same hand with which he has used his instruments of torture, and crushed the bones of a thousand unhappy wretches by the aid of the thumb-screw and the boot. The poorest mendicant, if his loathsome hand touches him, casts away with horror the rags which have been defiled by the impure contact. Do you know that the chancellor, after having signed his appointment, casts the seal under the table in token of disgust; that in France, should the executioner die, the sergeants of the Provost will sooner pay a fine of forty *livres* than perform his duty; that the condemned criminal Chorchil, when he was offered his pardon with the post of executioner, refused it point blank; that Turnryn, the Bishop of Maestricht, ordered a church to be purified, into which the executioner had entered; that the Czarina Petrovna washes her face each time that she is compelled to witness an execution? Does not Caron say that the brigand, Robin Hood, was the superior of the highwayman Philipperan, in his Descent of Saint George into Hades? Truly, master——"

"Do I not hear the tramp of a horse behind us?" interrupted Ordener.

They turned round, and as, during the long and scientific harangue of Spiagudry, the day had broken, they were able to distinguish, at about a hundred yards' distance, a horseman, clothed in black and

mounted on a small Norwegian pony, waving his hand to them.

"For Heaven's sake, master!" said the nervous Spiagudry, "let us press on. This man has all the air of an archer."

"What, shall we two fly before one man?"

"Alas! twenty sparrow-hawks fly before one owl. What good is there in waiting until an officer of justice comes up with us?"

"And who says that he is one?" answered Ordener, whose eyes were not dimmed by fear. "Reassure yourself, my gallant guide, I can see who it is. Let us stop."

Spiagudry was compelled to yield; but he, too, speedily recovered his courage upon recognising the grave, calm face of Athanasius Munder. The minister smiled kindly upon them, and checked his panting pony.

"My children," said he, "it is for your sake that I have retraced my steps, and heaven will, no doubt, grant that my absence, with a good intention, will not be prejudicial to those who require my aid."

"Reverend sir," answered Ordener, "we shall be happy to be of service to you in any way that lies in our power."

"It is I, on the contrary, young man, that wish to serve you. Can you inform me of the object of your journey?"

"Reverend chaplain, it is not in my power to do so."

"I hope, my son, that it is not distrust upon your part that forbids you to make this communication to me; misfortune will attend him who does not trust his fellow-man, even though he may only have met him once."

Ordener was deeply moved by the humility and impressiveness with which the priest spoke.

"All that I can tell you, my father, is that we are going to the mountains of the North."

"That is what I thought, my son, and is the reason why I followed you. In those mountains you will find bands of miners and hunters, that travellers have too much cause to dread."

"Well?" asked Ordener.

"Well, I know how futile it would be to endeavour to divert from his route a young man who is indifferent to danger; but the esteem which I have conceived for you has pointed out to me a means of being of service to you. The unhappy coiner, to whom yesterday I administered the last consolations of religion, had been at one time a miner. Just before his death he gave me this pass, signed by his own name, and assured me that it would preserve me from all danger should I have occasion to travel in the mountains. Of what use can it be to a poor priest who spends his life amongst the prisoners, *inter castra latronum*, and who ought to seek for no defence except prayer and penitence. I did not refuse to receive the pass, lest it should afflict the poor creature who had nothing left on earth to give; but Heaven has inspired me with the idea to give this parchment to you, that it may accompany you in your journey, and that the gift of the dead man may be of service to the living one."

Ordener received with gratitude the present of the good old priest.

"Reverend chaplain," said he, "your wishes shall be fulfilled; but," he added, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword, "I carry my right to pass here."

"Young man," answered the priest, "perhaps this scrap of paper will protect you better than your weapon of steel. The look of a repentant sinner is

more powerful than the blade 'of the archangel. Adieu! My prisoners wait for me. Will you pray for them, and for me?"

"Holy priest," replied Ordener, smiling, "be sure that your prisoners shall have their pardon. I promise it to you."

"Oh, do not speak so confidently, my son, do not tempt the Lord. One man cannot answer for the heart of another, and you cannot say what the son of the viceroy may decide. Perhaps he will not even give audience to a humble gaol chaplain. Farewell, my son, may your journey be a prosperous one, and may the thought of the poor priest and his prisoners sometimes occur to your kind heart."



CHAPTER XVI.

THE VICTIM OF THE DEMON.

IN 1675 (that is to say twenty years before this history commences), there were great but simple rejoicings in the village of Thoctree, on the occasion of the marriage of gentle Lucy Pelnyrth and tall and handsome Carroll Stadt. It is true that all the village knew of their love, and who could fail to be interested in a marriage which would unite the hearts that loved so ardently and well. Born in the same village, working together in the same fields, Carroll and Lucy had often sat down together on the grass to rest after their childish games, and when they grew older, on returning from work, Lucy had leaned upon the arm of Carroll, and they could scarcely recollect the time when they had not been lovers.

But all things had not gone smoothly at first, there were points of domestic interest, family feuds, and many other obstacles, so that for one entire year they were separated from each other; and Carroll, far from his Lucy, had bitterly bemoaned his hard fate, whilst Lucy had shed many a tear at her enforced separation from Carroll. It was by saving her from a terrible danger that Carroll at last obtained Lucy's hand.

One day he heard female shrieks issuing from an adjacent forest—they came from Lucy who had been

surprised whilst wandering in the wood by a brigand greatly dreaded by the mountaineers. When Carroll arrived upon the spot she lay senseless in the arms of her assailant, who was endeavouring to bear her away.

Without an instant's hesitation Carroll flew at the monster with a human face, who, from the singular roars that he uttered, was known to all by the name of Han.

Carroll dared to attack this creature whom all others avoided, for love gave him the strength and courage of a lion. He rescued Lucy and restored her to her father, who in turn granted him her hand.

All the villagers were glad on the day on which the union took place. Lucy alone seemed sad; never indeed had she cast so tender a look upon Carroll; but that look was as sad as it was tender. Every instant, as her husband's joy seemed to increase, she became more sad.

"Oh, Lucy, my Lucy!" exclaimed Carroll, as they left the church, "the appearance of that villain, which generally brings with it sorrow, has been the source of my happiness."

Those near remarked that she shook her head but said nothing.

Evening came, and the newly-married pair were left alone in their cottage, whilst the dance and music went on gaily upon the village green.

The next morning Carroll Stadt was nowhere to be found.

A few lines in his handwriting had been given to Lucy's father, by a hunter from the mountains of Koler, who had met the bridegroom at daylight, wandering upon the shores of the gulf. Old Will Pelnyrth showed this letter to the pastor and the

syndic, and nothing remained of that day of happiness but the broken heart of Lucy Pelnyrth. not

This mysterious ending to the marriage threw the whole village into consternation, and the inhabitants vainly endeavoured to discover the reasons for it. Prayers for the repose of the soul of Carroll were said in the same church where but a day or two before the nuptial hymn had been sung.

Ninemonths afterwards, in sorrow and mourning, the Widow Stadt gave birth to a son, and that same night the village of Golyn was entirely destroyed by the fall of a rock that overhung it.

The birth of her son did not alleviate the sadness of his mother. In no way did Gill Stadt resemble his father Carroll, his behaviour as a child seemed to foretell a wild and desperate life. Once, a little strange-looking man, whom some of the mountaineers asserted to be the famous Han of Iceland, visited the widow's hut, and those who passed by declared that they heard sounds of passionate weeping mingled with the roaring of a wild beast. This man took away little Gill, and after some months restored him to his mother, more gloomy and savage than ever.

The Widow Stadt felt for the child a mingled tenderness and aversion; sometimes she clasped him to her bosom, as the sole creature that yet bound her to life; at others, she repulsed him, and called upon Carroll, her own Carroll, to come to her. No one in the world could understand her secret grief.

Gill had reached his twenty-third year; he saw Guth Sterson, and fell madly in love with her. Guth was rich, and he was poor; so he started for the mines of Røraas, in order to gain money as quickly as possible; since that, his mother had heard nothing of him.

One night, as she was sitting thinking before the

surprised spinning-wheel by which she gained her livelihood, with her lamp burning low, her mind reverted to her son whom she so ardently desired to see; for, unkind as he had been to her, she yet loved him. How could she help loving one through whom she had suffered so much? She rose from her seat, and took from a cupboard a crucifix, covered with dust: for a moment she glanced at it with a suppliant expression; then, all of a sudden, she cast it from her in horror—"Pray!" she exclaimed, "how *can* I pray? Wretched creature that I am, I can only pray to the powers of darkness, for it is to them that I belong."

She relapsed into her gloomy reverie, when she was startled by a knock at the door. Such an event was a rare occurrence; for, thanks to her lonely and mysterious life, the inhabitants of Thootree shunned her, believing that she held communion with evil spirits.

"If it were my son—oh, if it was Gill!" cried she, as she hastened to the door.

Alas, it was not her son; it was a little man, clothed in a robe of coarse cloth, the hood of which concealed everything but a black beard.

"Holy man," said the widow, "you do not know whose house you have entered?"

"Yes, I do," replied the hermit, in a hollow and too well-known voice; and, throwing back his hood, and tearing off his gloves and his black beard, he disclosed a hideous face, a red beard, and hands the fingers of which terminated in long curved claws.

The widow shrieked, and hid her face in her hands.

"Well," cried the little man, "has not twenty-four years taught you to grow accustomed to the husband that you will have to look upon through all eternity?"

In terror she murmured—"Eternity!"

"Listen, Lucy Pelnryth, I bring you news of your son."

"Of my son—where is he? Why does he not come?"

"He cannot come."

"But tell me why? I will forgive you much, if you can bring me a little happiness."

"I do bring you happiness," said the man in a hollow voice, "for you are but a weak woman; and I marvel much how you could have borne such a son. Rejoice then, for you feared that your son would walk in my footsteps! Fear it no longer."

"What!" exclaimed the delighted mother, "has my beloved Gill then changed for the better?"

The little man greeted her joy with a sardonic laugh.

"Oh, he is much changed," said he.

"But why does he not hasten to embrace me? Have you seen him?"

"He sleeps."

"Why have you not woke him, saying—'Gill, come and see your mother'?"

"His slumber was too deep."

"Oh, when shall I see him?" said she, "tell me, I entreat you—shall I see him soon?"

The false hermit drew from beneath his robe a species of goblet of singular shape.

"Widow," said he, "drink to the speedy return of your son!"

The widow uttered a cry of horror; it was a human skull! She put out her hands to thrust away the loathsome object, but could not utter a word.

"No, no," cried the man in a voice of thunder, "do not turn away your eyes; look, woman, you asked to see your son, behold all that remains of him."

And in the fading light of the lamp he held out to her the bare and polished skull of her son.

Too many horrors had passed over that unfortunate head for even this last one to overwhelm her entirely.

"Dead!" murmured she feebly, "dead—let me die, too, then."

"Die, if you wish; but remember, Lucy Pelnyrth, the past; think of the forest of Thoctree, and do not forget that the day that the demon took possession of your body, your soul was doomed to hell. I am the demon, and you, Lucy, are my spouse for all eternity! Die, then, if you will!"

In these superstitious countries it was an article of belief that the spirits of the other world sometimes dwelt on earth, fulfilling a career of crime and calamity. Amongst these supernatural criminals, Han of Iceland had achieved an appalling renown. And it was further believed that if a woman, either by violence or seduction, became the prey of one of these demons in human form, that she was doomed for all eternity to be his companion in the regions of everlasting punishment.

"Alas," said she, "I cannot escape; and yet, what was my crime? The strength of a young girl could not cope with that of a demon. O my well-beloved Caroll, I was innocent, and yet——"

As she spoke, her looks were full of madness, and her incoherent words seemed formed by the convulsive working of her lips.

"Oh, Caroll!" she exclaimed, "that day I was defiled, though innocent; and the demon asks me if I remember it. Alas! and for that I shall be punished to all eternity, and I shall never meet you again; you, for whom I have shed so many tears. What good is death to me? I shall only go with this monster to a world peopled with beings like himself, and what have I done that my misfortunes in this world should be my condemnation in the next?"

The hermit cast upon her a glance of power and triumph.

"Ah!" cried she, turning to him, "tell me, is not this some terrible dream with which your presence has inspired me? for you well know that since the day of my ruin, every night in which your spirit has visited me has been marked by impure apparitions, hideous dreams, or terrible visions."

"Woman, return to reason; it is true that you are awake, and it is true that Gill is dead!"

The remembrance of her first and great misfortune had for the moment effaced in the heart of the mother that of her loss, but these words brought it back to her. "My son, my son!" sobbed she, and the depth of her agony would have moved any other than the fiend who listened to her. "But no, he will return; he is not dead, I cannot believe that he is dead!"

"Go, then, and ask the rocks of Rœraas that crushed him, and ask the waves of the Gulf of Drontheim that closed over the woman he loved?"

The widow fell upon her knees, and with a violent effort exclaimed, "God, great God!"

"Silence, servant of Satan!"

The unhappy woman ceased, and he continued:

"Doubt not that your son is dead; he was punished for a folly which his father before him committed; he let his heart, which should have been harder than granite, be softened by a woman. You have been mine, but I never loved you, and my son was deceived by the woman for whom he died."

"Dead!" cried she, "dead! Oh, Gill, you were born for my misery. You were conceived in anguish, and nursed in mourning; never did your caresses respond to mine, nor your embraces to those that I lavished on you. You always repulsed and avoided your mother—your poor lonely mother. You made me forget my old sorrow by creating new ones. You left me for the demon, the author of your existence

and of my widowhood. Gill, you were never a comfort or a joy to me, and yet your death seems the most unbearable of my afflictions." She could say no more, and hiding her head in her black veil, sobbed piteously.

"Weak woman," muttered the hermit; then in a louder voice, he exclaimed: "Conquer your grief, Lucy Pelnyrth, as I have crushed down mine. Listen. Before you wept for the loss of your son, I had commenced to avenge him. It was for a soldier of the Regiment of Munkholm that his betrothed deceived him; the whole regiment shall perish by my hand. Behold, Lucy Pelnyrth!" and drawing back his sleeves, he showed to the widow his mis-shapen arms stained with blood.

"Yes," cried he, with a kind of roar, "on the sands of Urdlital and the precipices of Carcadthymon, the spirit of Gill can roam contented. Do you not see this blood? Console yourself."

But the widow, wrapped in her grief, kept silence.

"What," said he, with a savage laugh, "silent and immovable? Why, you are not a woman. Tell me," and he grasped her arm to attract her attention, "has not a messenger brought you a sealed iron casket?"

The widow, who had paid but little attention to his words, made a sign in the negative, and returned to her gloomy thoughts.

"Ah, wretch—ah, faithless Spiagudry, that gold shall cost you dear!" and casting his hermit's robe upon the ground, he darted off with the growl of a hyena seeking his prey.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MURMUR OF THE STORM.

THE coast of Norway is so indented with shallow bays, creeks, reefs, lakes, and little capes, that they fatigue the memory of the traveller and the patience of the topographer. According to the popular belief of former ages, each isthmus had a demon who haunted it, each bay its resident fairy, and each promontory its protecting saint; for superstition mingles together all beliefs in order to add to its terrors. Upon the coast of Kelvel, some miles to the north of the Grotto of Walderhog, was one spot which was said to be entirely free from the jurisdiction of saint or demon. It was a meadow by the mouth of a river, overhung by a lofty rock, upon which could still be perceived the ruins of the castle of Ralph, or Rudolph, the Giant. This little meadow, running down to the sea, and sheltered by rocks covered with heather, owed its advantages to the name of its former possessor, for neither fairy, demon, nor saint would have cared to interfere with the privileges of Ralph the Giant. It is true that the formidable name of Ralph itself gave an unpleasant reputation to the locality, but, for all that, the fisherman who moored his barque in Ralph the Giant's creek had never seen the corpse lights gleam and glimmer, nor the fairy skim the heather in his flaming car, nor the saint ascend to the moon after the conclusion of his prayers.

If, however, on the night following the great storm, the surf of the ocean and the violence of the wind had permitted any mariner to take shelter in the little bay, he would perhaps have experienced a feeling of superstitious awe upon seeing three men seated round a fire which was blazing in the midst of the meadow. Two of them wore the large felt hats and loose trousers of the royal miners. Their arms were bared to the shoulder, they wore high boots, and a belt of red cloth sustained their curved sabre and pistols. Both carried a kind of bugle made of cow's horn slung from their neck. One of them was old, and the other very young, and the thick beard of the elder, and the long floating locks of the younger, gave a savage expression to their faces, which were naturally hard and weatherbeaten. From the bearskin cap, boiled leather coat, tight breeches, bark sandals, the musket slung across his back, and the axe which gleamed in his hand, it was easy to recognise in their companion a mountaineer from the northern district of Norway. The three men often turned their heads towards the path that led through the woods to the meadow, and from their words seemed to be expecting a fourth personage.

"I say, Kennybol, do you know that at this hour we should not be so undisturbed if we were waiting for the messenger from the Count Griffenfeld in the neighbouring field, which belongs to the Imp Tulbytilbet, or below there in the Bay of St. Cuthbert?"

"Do not speak so loud, Jonas," replied the mountaineer to the old miner. "A blessing on Ralph the Giant who protects us! But may Heaven guard me from putting a foot in the meadow of Tulbytilbet. The other day I went there to pick hawthorn, and I pulled up Mandragora by mistake, which began to bleed and scream, so as almost to drive me mad."

The younger man¹ began to laugh. "In faith, Kennybol," said he, "it does not want much Mandragora to affect your weak brain."

"What do you mean by weak brain?" said Kennybol angrily. "Here, Jonas, he laughs at the Mandragora like an idiot who makes a plaything of a skull."

"Hum," answered Jonas, "then let him go into the Grotto of Walderhog, where the heads of those who have been murdered by Han of Iceland return each night and dance round his bed of dried leaves, gnashing their teeth to lull him to sleep."

"Yes, that is true," affirmed the mountaineer.

"But," asked the young man, "does not Master Hacket, for whom we are now waiting, promise that Han shall put himself at the head of the insurrection?"

"Yes," replied Kennybol, "and with the aid of this demon we are sure of giving a drubbing to all the green jackets that they may send against us from Copenhagen or Drontheim."

"All the better," answered the old miner, "but for all that it is not I, that will watch by the side of his bed."

At that instant a rustling amongst the brushwood attracted the men's attention; they turned towards the sound, and by a gleam of light from the fire were able to recognise the new comer.

"It is he, it is Master Hacket. Welcome Master Hacket, we have been waiting for you; it is three quarters of an hour since we have been here."

This Master *Hacket* was a little stout man, dressed in black, but whose smiling face had at times a sinister look upon it.

"My friends," exclaimed he, "I was delayed by my ignorance of the way, and by the precautions that I

have had to take. I quitted Count Schumacher this morning; here are three purses well filled with gold, which he bid me give you."

The two elder men seized the purses greedily, but the younger miner refused the gold that Hacket offered.

"Keep your money, good master," said he. "I should lie if I said I rebelled for the sake of the Count Schumacher, for I do it to free the miners from the royal tax, and that my poor mother may have some warm clothing this winter."

Far from appearing disconcerted, Master Hacket smiled, and replied: "Then it is to your good mother, my dear Norbilte, that the count sends this money, that she may keep herself as warm as she likes."

The young man was mollified and took the purse.

"But be careful, my friends, you must not say what you did just now, that it is not for the sake of the Count of Griffenfeld that you are taking up arms——"

"Why," replied the two elder men, "we know that the tax oppresses us, but we know nothing of Schumacher the state prisoner."

"What!" replied the envoy. "Can you be so ungrateful? Were you not groaning in your subterranean galleries, deprived of air and light, robbed of your rights and bent down by a heavy tax? Who came to your aid, and reanimated your sinking courage—who has given you gold, and weapons? Is it not my illustrious master Count Griffenfeld, who is more unfortunate than yourselves? And now, though accepting his help, you refuse to assist him to regain his liberty, at the same time as you do your own?"

"You are right," exclaimed the young miner, "we have been acting unjustly."

"Yes, Master Hacket," answered the two old men, "we will fight for Count Schumacher."

"Courage, my friends; rise in the name of the count, bear it from one end of Norway to the other. Everything is favourable; one of your most formidable enemies is General Levin de Knud, who governs this province; by the secret influence of my master he is about to be recalled to Berghen. Come, Kennybol, and you, Jonas and Norbilte, are your comrades ready?"

"My brethen of Guldbrandshal," replied Norbilte, "only await the signal—to-morrow if you wish——"

"To-morrow be it, then; it is best that the young miners of which you are the chief should be first to raise the standard of revolt. And you, Jonas?"

"Six hundred brave hearts from the Isles of Maröer, who have been living for the past three days on chamois flesh and bears' fat in the forest of Bennallay, are only waiting for a blast from the horn of their old captain, Jonas."

"Good, and you, Kennybol?"

"All those who carry an axe in the mountains of Kole, and who climb the rocks with bared knees, are ready to join their brethen the miners when the word is given."

"It is well, and announce to your comrades that they may be certain of victory—announce to them," continued the messenger, raising his voice, "that Han of Iceland will be their chief."

"Is that certain?" cried the three men, in whose voices fear and hope mingled.

The messenger answered: "I will meet you four days from this, with your comrades, in the mine of Apsyl-Corlti, near the Lake of Smiasen, Han of Iceland will be with me."

"We will be there," answered the three chiefs, "and may heaven not abandon those who will be assisted by the demon."

"Fear nothing from heaven," sneered Hacket.

"Listen, in the ruins of Cray you will find banners for your troops. Do not forget the rallying cry: 'Long live Schumacher; let us save Schumacher!' But now we must separate, for the day draws near. But first swear to keep secret all that has passed?"

Without a word, the three chiefs pricked their left arms with their sabres, and letting a few drops from each trickle into the hands of the messenger, exclaimed, "You have our blood, as token of our fidelity."

Then they separated, and there remained no trace of the meeting in the meadow except the half-extinguished embers, the sparks from which now and then mounted high in the air, and were borne to the ruined and lonely towers of Ralph the Giant.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE KING'S PROCLAMATION.

BENIGNUS SPIAGUDRY was utterly unable to comprehend why a young man who appeared to be endowed with health and wealth should risk his life by seeking out the dreaded bandit Han of Iceland. Often since they had started upon their expedition had he brought up the question, as he thought, with much adroitness, but in vain, for Ordener kept his secret with the greatest pertinacity. Poor Spiagudry was not more fortunate in obtaining information upon other points upon which his curiosity had been excited. He had even risked a question as to the name and family of his young master. "Call me Ordener," was the reply, in a tone which forbade further questioning.

It was therefore necessary to resign himself, for everyone has his own secrets, and Spiagudry remembered that in his knapsack was a certain iron casket, the whereabouts of which he had determined to confide to no one. It was now four days since they had quitted Drontheim, without progressing very much on the way to their destination, not so much from the damage caused to the roads by the storm, as by the devious and circuitous routes which the guardian thought it necessary to take to elude his pursuers. After leaving Skongen on their right, they reached the shores of the Lake of Sparbo. This vast expanse of water presented

at once a magnificent and gloomy spectacle, reflecting as it did upon its surface the last rays of the sun and the first stars of night, and surrounded by a frame of high rocks and dark oaks and pines.

Orderer halted and gazed upon the old forests which had arrived at maturity long before the Druidical epoch, and the chalk-built huts of the inhabitants of the village, spread over the sloping shores like a flock of strayed sheep. He listened to the distant clatter of the forges mingled with the murmur of the wind through the tree-tops, the cries of the wild birds and the regular plash of the waves upon the shore. Towards the north an immense mass of granite rose majestically above the little village of Ölmoë, its summit covered with ruins, looking like a giant wearied with his load.

Orderer remained silent and motionless until his companion exclaimed :

“ You do well, young master, to meditate thus beside the Norwegian lake, which has a wide-spread renown for its sand-flies.”

The words, and the gesture by which it was accompanied, would have excited laughter in anyone but a lover separated from his adored mistress.

“ Besides, permit me to remark that the day is declining, and that you must hasten if you wish us to reach the village of Ölmoë before the twilight.”

His words had reason in them, and Orderer resumed his journey, whilst Spiagudry followed, carefully noting the botanical and physiological curiosities which the shores of the Lake of Sparbo offer to the observer, and pouring out a flood of erudite babble, to which Orderer plunged in his own thoughts, paid but little attention.

At last they arrived at the village of Ölmoë, upon the green of which an unusual crowd had assembled. The inhabitants of the village—blacksmiths, hunters and fishermen—had left their abodes, and grouped

themselves together around a circular hillock upon which several men had taken up their position, one of whom was sounding a horn and waving a small black and white banner above the heads of the crowd.

"It is some quack," said Spiagudry, "some ignorant wretch who turns gold into lead, and sore places into ulcers. Let us see what invention of the Evil One he is going to sell to these ignorant villagers."

Spiagudry was wrong. On nearing the crowd they recognised, by his round cap tapering to a point, the syndic of the district, surrounded by some archers, whilst the man with the horn was the town crier.

The fugitive guardian's terrors at once returned, and he murmured in a low voice :

"In truth, Master Ordener, in entering this paltry place, I did not think to fall upon a syndic. May Saint Hospice protect me ! What is he going to say ?"

He was not kept long in doubt, for the squeaking voice of the crier was raised at once, and patiently listened to by the little world of Oölnoe.

"In the name of His Majesty, and by order of His Excellency General Levin de Knud, Governor. The High Sheriff of Drontheim makes known to all the inhabitants of towns, villages and hamlets in the province of Drontheimhuus :

"1st. That a reward of one thousand royal crowns is offered for the apprehension of Han of Iceland, murderer and incendiary, dead or alive.

"2nd. That a reward of four royal crowns is offered for the apprehension of Benignus Spiagudry, ex-guardian of the Spladgest at Drontheim, who has committed necromancy and sacrilege.

"3rd. That this edict be read throughout the province in all towns, villages and hamlets, to facilitate its being carried out."

It can be imagined with what feelings the miserable

Benignus Spiagudry listened to this edict, and no doubt the unequivocal signs of terror and agitation which he displayed would have attracted the attention of the villagers, had they not been too deeply engaged in listening to the crier.

"A price upon the head of Han," cried an old fisherman, whose dripping nets hung over his shoulder. "By Saint Usulph, they should also offer a reward for the head of Beelzebub."

"And to preserve the proportion," replied a hunter, easily to be recognised by his doublet made of the skin of the chamois, "they should only offer five hundred crowns for the latter demon."

"Glory be to the blessed mother in heaven," muttered an old woman, with her distaff in her hand. "I should like to see the head of Han, if it is only to be certain whether he has a pair of live coals instead of eyes."

"Certainly he has," answered another old woman, "for he set fire to the cathedral at Drontheim by merely looking at it. I should like to see the whole of him, with his serpent's tail, his cloven feet, and his wings like a great bat's."

"Who has told you these stories, good mother?" interposed the hunter with an air of fatuity. "I, myself, have met this Han of Iceland in the ravines of Medsyhoth. He is a man like the rest of us, but he is as tall as a poplar of forty years' growth."

"Is that true?" asked a voice, which had a peculiar hollow sound, from somewhere in the crowd.

Spiagudry trembled as he heard it, and glancing round, saw that it came from a short man, whose face was hidden under the broad-brimmed hat of a miner. His body was covered with a garment composed of reed matting and seal-skin.

"By my faith," said a smith, with a loud laugh,

"they may offer for his head a thousand or ten thousand crowns if they like, and he may be four feet or forty feet high, but it is not I that will go to see."

"Nor I!" cried the fisherman.

"Nor I! nor I!" repeated a dozen voices.

"Well, if anyone is tempted to try," said the short man, with a grim laugh, "he will find Han of Iceland to-morrow in the ruins of Arbar, near Siniassen, and after that in the Grotto of Walderhog."

"Are you sure, my good man?"

This question was put by Ordener, who had listened to the conversation with an eagerness easily to be understood, and at the same instant by a stout, short man, dressed in black, with a sinister smile upon his face, who, at the sound of the crier's horn, had come out of the only tavern that the village boasted of.

The little man in the broad-brimmed hat looked at both his questioners earnestly, and then replied in one word:

"Yes."

"But how can we know that your statement is correct?" asked Ordener.

"I know where Han of Iceland is now as well as I know the whereabouts of Benignus Spiagudry. Neither are far from here at this moment."

All his former terrors awoke in Spiagudry's breast. Scarcely daring to glance at the little man, and fearing that his French wig was not a sufficient disguise, he pulled Ordener by the cloak and whispered eagerly to him:

"Master, let us hasten out of this ill-omened village."

Ordener, as surprised as his guide, looked attentively at the little man, who, turning his back, endeavoured to conceal his features.

"I have seen Benignus Spiagudry at the Spladgest at Drontheim," remarked the fisherman. "That is the one that they offer four crowns for."

The hunter laughed.

"They won't catch me looking after him for that. Why, I get as much for the skin of a blue fox."

Spiagudry would at any other time have felt insulted by this comparison; but just now it very much reassured him. He nevertheless addressed an earnest prayer to Ordener, entreating him to leave the village at once, and the latter having obtained all the information that he could, turned on his heel and left the crowd.

Although when the travellers reached Oölmoe it had been their intention to pass the night there, yet they both left it as though by mutual agreement. Ordener's motive was to meet Han as soon as possible, and Spiagudry's to put as great a distance as possible between the archers and himself.

After proceeding some time in silence, Ordener addressed his guide in a friendly manner.

"Old man," said he, "what is the name of that ruin in which Han of Iceland is to be found to-morrow? At least, that little man who seemed well acquainted with his haunts asserted so."

"I do not know, noble master. I did not catch what he said," answered Spiagudry, who, in fact, had been too frightened to hear what was said.

"In that case," answered the young man, "I must resign myself not to meet him until the day after to-morrow at the Grotto of Walderhog."

"Yes, the Grotto of Walderhog is his favourite haunt."

"Let us take the road thither then," said Ordener.

"Turn to the left behind the peak of Oölmoe; but it is two days' journey to Walderhog."

"Did you know that singular little man?" asked Ordener adroitly, "who seemed to know you so well?"

This question again aroused in Spiagudry the fears that had begun to disappear as they left Oëlnoe behind them.

"No, master, not at all," answered he, forcing himself to speak. "Only he had a very strange voice."

Ordener endeavoured to reassure him.

"Fear nothing, old man," said he. "Serve me well, and I will protect you, and if I return victorious from my encounter with Han, I promise you your pardon, and will in addition give you the whole of the reward."

Honest Benignus loved his life well; but he also had an extraordinary partiality for gold. Ordener's promises were like magic words to him, not only did they dissipate all his terrors, but they roused his spirits and caused him to utter one of his long harangues, accompanied by strange gesticulations and learned quotations.

"Master Ordener," commenced he, "even if I had to argue out the matter with Over Belsuith the Talkative, nothing would prevent me from asserting that you are a good and honourable young man. What indeed is more worthy and glorious, *quid citharâ, tubâ, vel campanâ dignius*, than to nobly risk your life to deliver the country from a monster, a brigand, and a demon in whom all the demons, monsters and brigands seem to be united. Do not let them say that sordid interest is your incentive, for the noble Ordener is ready to abandon the profits of his victory to the old man who will conduct him to within a mile of the Grotto of Walderhog, for you will permit me to await the result at the village of Suib, just a mile from the Grotto of Walderhog, and when you shall have

achieved your glorious victory, there will be throughout all Norway a joy similar to that of Vermund the Outlaw, when, from the summit of this very peak of Oëlmoe, he saw the tall beacon which his brother Halfdan had lighted in token of his pardon upon the fortress of Munkholm."

At this name Ordener interrupted him quickly :

"Can we gain the summit of this rock and perceive the fortress of Munkholm?"

"Certainly. A pathway which commences in yonder wood, which we shall enter shortly, rises by degrees to a square platform, and from thence, by steps cut in the face of the rock, we can reach the tower in which Vermund the Outlaw took refuge. You can see its ruins by the moonlight."

"Then, old man, point out this pathway quickly. It is amongst those ruins that we will pass the night, in those ruins from which the fortress of Munkholm can be seen."

"Do not think of it, master. The fatigues of the day——"

"I will help you on your way. My strength is unimpaired."

"Master, the pathway has not been used for years. It is blocked up with roots and broken stones, and in the darkness of night——"

"I will ascend in front."

"Perhaps some ferocious beast, some hideous monster——"

"It was not to shrink before monsters that I undertook this journey."

The idea of spending the night so near Oëlmoe was far from pleasing to Spiagudry, whilst the thought of being able to see the lights of Munkholm filled the breast of Ordener with feelings of delight.

"My young master," urged Spiagudry, "renounce

this project. I have a presentiment that some evil will ensue."

But Ordener spurned his prayer.

"Come," cried he impatiently, "remember the terms of your agreement; point out the pathway at once?"

"We shall be on it almost immediately," answered his guide, who felt himself constrained to obey.

In fact, in a few minutes more their feet were in the path, but Spiagudry remarked with astonishment, mingled with terror, that the long grass which covered it was broken and trodden down, and that the pathway of Vermund the Outlaw had been recently used.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE STORM BURSTS.

GENERAL LEVIN DE KNUD was seated before a table covered with open and closed letters, buried in deep thought. At length, as if with some difficulty, he roused himself, and called one of his secretaries, a man named Wapherney, who was seated at an adjoining table to him.

"And you saw the bodies?" asked the general.

"Yes, general, three men of the Regiment of Munkholm, two archers, and the body of an old man with a white beard who was found at the foot of the Rock of Lyraas. The soldiers and the archers were found in the ravine of Carcadthymon. The bodies were all taken to the Spladgest, and it is impossible to describe the awful manner in which their bodies were mutilated. Apart from being crushed out of all shape, they are covered with deep scratches as though from the claws of a wild beast."

"But how did the soldiers get to Carcadthymon?"

"It is said they were sent in pursuit of the fugitive guardian of the Spladgest, for whom a reward has been offered. The body of the old man was discovered the day before."

"Have they been murdered by the miners of whose disaffection we hear so much?" asked the general.

"There are no miners or mines within miles of Carcadthymon," replied Wapherney.

"Well," remarked the general, "we must have an enquiry. And now for the news of the day."

The general opened a large, official-looking paper, and burst into a loud exclamation of surprise.

"Who would have thought," cried he, "that the miners would have gone so far as this? There must be some hidden power working to have driven them to open revolt. Do you know, Waptherney, that the matter is serious? Five or six hundred scoundrels from the Isles of Faroër have already left the mines, under the command of an old bandit called Jonas. A young fanatic named Norbilte has put himself at the head of the malcontents at Gulbrandshal, whilst at Sund-Moër, at Hufsallo, and Kongsberg, the workmen are only waiting for the signal to rise, or may by this time have already risen. The mountaineers have joined the movement, and under the leadership of an old fox named Kennybol; whilst, most extraordinary news of all, that desperate villain, Han of Iceland, is spoken of as the chief of the insurgents. What do you say to all that, Waptherney?"

"Your excellency knows what measures——"

"There is one point in this deplorable affair that I cannot explain, and that is that they assert our prisoner Schumacher is the instigator of the insurrection. This, which seems to astonish no one, surprises me very much. It seems impossible for a man in whose society my noble Ordener took pleasure to be a traitor, and yet they assure me that the miners have risen in his name, and that it is their watchword; they even call him by the titles that the king has deprived him of. All this seems authentic. But how was it that six days ago the Countess d'Ahlefeld knew all these details from the moment when the first symptoms of discontent showed themselves in the mines? However, we must act. My seal, Waptherney."

The general hastily wrote and sealed three letters.

"Send this to Colonel Væltrain at Munkholm. It is for ordering his musketeers to proceed at once to the revolted provinces. This for the officer in charge of the prisoner, commanding him to keep good watch over his charge. I must go and see Schumacher myself. Send this letter to Major Wolhan at Skongen, that he may send a party against the rebels at once. Go, Wapherney, and do not lose a minute."

The secretary left the room, and the governor was in a moment deep in meditation.

"All this is very worrying," thought he; "the revolt there, the intrigues of the chancellor here, and that rash Ordener one does not know where. Perhaps he is amongst the rebels, leaving to my protection Schumacher, who is conspiring against the state, and his daughter, for whose sake I sent away the company of soldiers commanded by Frederic d'Ahlefeld, whom Ordener accuses of—by the way, it seems that his company is in a good position to check the first movements of the rebel columns. Walstrom, where it is quartered, is near Lake Smiasen, and the ruins of Arbar. It is to that point that the insurgents will first move." At this period of his thoughts the general was disturbed by the opening of a door. "Well, what is it, Gustave?"

"General, it is a messenger who asks for your excellency."

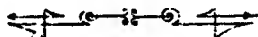
"What more is there—some new disaster? Let the messenger come in."

The messenger entered, and handed a packet to the governor.

"On the part of the viceroy," said he.

The general tore open the cover. "By Saint George!" cried he, "they must be all mad. The viceroy summons me to meet him at Berghen on a

pressing matter by order of the king. This is a good time for pressing business. 'The Grand Chancellor, who is at Drontheim, will act for you in your absence'—a substitute in whom I have no confidence—'The bishop will assist him.' By the saints, Frederic chooses well—two civilians as governors for a province in a state of open rebellion. But the order is pressing. I must go. But before doing so, I will visit Schumacher, and question him. I am sure that they wish to involve me in some intrigue. But I have an infallible compass which never fails to direct me right—my conscience."



CHAPTER XX.

IN SEARCH OF HAN.

“**Y**ES, lord count, this very day in the ruins of Arbar we shall meet him. A number of circumstances make me believe in the truth of the intelligence which, as I told you, I picked up yesterday by the merest chance at Oölmoe.”

“Are we far from the ruins?”

“They are near the Lake of Smiasen; the guide says that we shall be there by mid-day.”

This conversation passed between two horsemen wrapped in brown cloaks, who in the early morning were following one of the devious paths that run through the forest which is situated between the Lakes of Sparho and Smiasen. A mountaineer, who acted as guide, preceded them, armed with an axe, and with his horn slung over his shoulder. He was mounted on a little grey pony, and in the rear were four servants armed to the teeth, but at a sufficient distance so as to enable the horsemen to converse in private.

“If this brigand of Iceland is in the ruins of Arbar,” said one of the riders, in a respectful tone, “it will be a point gained, for up to the present it has been impossible to get hold of him.”

“Do you think, Musdemon, that he will reject our proposals?”

“Impossible, your grace! We offer him gold and pardon, and what robber could refuse these?”

"But you know that this is no ordinary desperado. Do not judge him by yourself. If he refuses, how will you keep the promise that you made on the night before yesterday to the chiefs of the insurgents?"

"Well, in that case, your grace—but if we meet our man, I consider that the affair is settled. Have you forgotten that a false Han of Iceland will meet me in two days, not far from this spot?"

"You are always prepared, my dear Musdæmon," answered the count, and then each became absorbed in their own reflections.

Musdæmon, whose aim it was to keep his master in a good humour, began to question the guide, so as to withdraw the count from thoughts which might be of an unpleasant nature.

"My good man," asked he, "what is that kind of broken stone cross which stands up behind those young oaks?"

The guide, a dull-looking fellow, turned his head in the direction alluded to, shook it several times, and answered:

"Master, that is the oldest gibbet in Norway. The holy King Olaus had it built to hang a minister who made a compact with a robber."

The countenance of Musdæmon's patron showed at this reply a different expression than the latter had hoped to see.

"It is," continued the guide, "a very curious tale. Old Mother Oise has often told it to me. It seems the robber was deputed to hang the minister, and——"

The poor guide did not perceive that the tale with which he proposed to amuse the travellers had a precisely contrary effect.

"Enough, enough!" said Musdæmon, "I know that story."

"Insolent hound!" muttered the count, "he knew

the story. Ah, Musdæmon, you shall pay me dearly for this some day."

"Your grace is silent," said Musdæmon obsequiously.

"I was thinking of the best means of getting you the Order of the Dannebrog. The marriage of my daughter Ulrica and Baron Ordener would be a good occasion."

Musdæmon overwhelmed his patron with thanks and protestations.

"But," continued the count, "let us talk of *important* affairs. Do you think that the order to present himself at Berghen has yet reached General Levin de Knud?"

"*My* affairs," muttered Musdæmon, "it seems, are *not* important. My lord count," continued he aloud, "I should think that the messenger of the viceroy had before this arrived at Drontheim."

The count's voice assumed an affectionate tone.

"That summons to Berghen, my dear Musdæmon, was a master stroke of yours. You never conceived or executed a better plan."

"The credit belongs to your grace as much as to me," returned Musdæmon, always anxious to render the count a partner in his intrigues.

"My dear private secretary, you are too modest, but nothing will ever make me forget your eminent services. The presence of Elphège and the absence of de Knud will assure my triumph at Drontheim. I am now virtually the governor of the province, and if Han of Iceland accepts the command of the insurgents, which I shall offer him myself, it is I who will return with the appearance, in the eyes of the king, of having suppressed a dangerous rebellion and captured a formidable brigand."

As he almost whispered these words, the guide turned round.

"My masters," said he, "on yonder hillock, upon our left, *Biord the Just* had *Vellon of the Double-tongue* beheaded in the presence of the army. This traitor had managed to send to a distance the true defenders of the king, and had admitted the enemy into the camp, so that he might gain the credit of having saved the royal life——"

These extracts from the ancient history of Norway did not seem to Musdœmon's taste, for he roughly interrupted the guide:

"Come, come, my good fellow; keep these old tales to yourself. Keep on your road. What do we care for old times and ruins? You worry my master with your old women's stories."

He spoke the truth.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE CASTLE OF VERMUND THE OUTLAW.

ORDENER and Spiagudry ascended the narrow path that led to the summit of the Peak of Oëlmoe, with some little trouble, in spite of the light afforded by the moon.

As they got to the more elevated portions of the rock, the forest was replaced by heather, and the long grass by moss, with an occasional birch tree or stunted pine.

This vegetation, too, became more and more scanty, a sure sign that the summit was nearly reached. The bare rock began to show through the thin covering of earth, so that what we may call the skeleton of the mountain was disclosed.

"Master Ordener," said Spiagudry, whose spirits were rising, "do you know that this ascent is very fatiguing, and that it shows great devotion on my part to follow you? Ah! there is a magnificent specimen of the *convolvulus*. What a pity it is not daylight. I must say that it is a rather impertinent thing to value the head of a learned man like me at only four miserable crowns. Certainly, the celebrated Phœdrus was a slave, and Esop, if we may believe Doctor Planudus, was sold like a beast in the market place, and who would not be proud to have something in common with Esop?"

"And with the celebrated Han, too," added Ordener with a smile.

"By Saint Hospice!" answered the guardian of the dead, "do not utter his name so lightly. I could well dispense, I assure you, with such a companion, but would it not be a strange thing, Master Ordener, if the price of his head was gained by his companion in the proclamation—Benignus Spiagudry? But you, master, are more generous than Jason, for we do not hear that he gave the golden fleece to the pilot of the Argo, and certainly your enterprise, of which I confess I do not clearly see the object, is more perilous than that of Jason."

"But," said Ordener, "since you are acquainted with Han, give me some information respecting him? You have already told me he is not a giant, as is commonly reported——"

Spiagudry interrupted him: "Stay, master, did you not hear a noise behind us?"

"Yes," replied the young man languidly, "it is some wild beast, who, alarmed at our approach, has fled through the brushwood."

"You are right, master, it is I believe long since this path has been trodden by the feet of a human being; to judge from the weight of its tread, the animal must be a big one. It might have been an elk, or a reindeer, for this part of Norway is filled with them; there are also wild tiger cats. I saw one that had been brought to Copenhagen, and its size was monstrous. One day I must write a description of this savage beast."

"I wish," said Ordener, "that you would give me a description of a beast that is just as savage—that is to say, Han of Iceland."

"Lower your voice, master. How carelessly you utter that name—you do not know—Great Heavens, master, listen, listen!"

As he pronounced the words, Spiagudry pressed close to Ordener, who distinctly heard a kind of roar, similar to that which had so terrified the timid Spiagudry on that stormy evening when they had quitted Drontheim.

"Did you hear it?" exclaimed he, gasping with terror.

"Certainly I did," answered Ordener, "but there is nothing to be alarmed about. It was only the cry of a wild beast—perhaps of one of those very tiger cats that you were just now speaking of. Do you think that you could pass through a place like this without hearing something of the kind, especially at this hour of the night? I daresay they are more frightened of you than you are of them."

Spiagudry was encouraged by the calmness of his companion.

"Yes, very likely it might have been that, master, but the cry of that beast terribly resembled a voice that—but it was an evil influence, let me tell you, that made you insist upon climbing to the Castle of Vermund."

"Fear nothing, for you are with me," replied Ordener.

"Oh, nothing terrifies you, but there are not many Saint Pauls, who can handle vipers with impunity. You have not even noticed that upon our entrance into this unlucky path, the grass was trodden down, as though some one had passed here recently?"

"I confess that I did not notice it, and that my courage does not desert me at the sight of a bent blade of grass. See, we have passed through the heather, and we shall hear no more wild beasts. Resume your courage, my brave guide, and exert your strength; you will need it all, for no doubt the worst part of the ascent has yet to come."

"It is not that it is steeper, master, but the learned traveller, Tuckson, tells us that it is often blocked up with rocks and heavy stones, which it is impossible to remove. There is close to the postern of Maläer, which we are nearing, an enormous triangular of granite, which I have always been most anxious to examine. Shoënnig declares that upon it are three ancient Runic letters."

By dint of continually ascending the travellers had now arrived at a much dilapidated tower which barred the way.

"That is the postern of Maläer, master. It was always guarded by four men and was the advanced post of the Castle in Vermund's time.

In the midst of all this scientific discourse on the part of the guardian, they continued their route over rolling stones, sharp flints, and short grass, with an occasional stumble over precipitous rocks. Ordener forgot all his fatigue in the thought of once again gazing on the Towers of Munkholm, when all of a sudden Spiagdny exclaimed: "Ah, I see it, and—and this more than rewards me for all my toils!"

"What do you see?" asked Ordener, who was dreaming of his Ethel.

"The triangular stone, master, of which Shoënnig spoke. I shall be the third antiquary who has seen it—only it is annoying that it is so dark."

But upon nearing the famous block of stone, Spiagdny uttered a cry of disappointment and terror.

"What is it now?" exclaimed Ordener. "The stone is not across the road, but, on the contrary, leaves it open for us to pass?"

"And that is what frightens me," answered Bëgnus, in a voice of terror.

"Why?"

"Why, master, do you not see that the base, which

was set firmly on the ground, now presents itself to us, and that the pyramid rests on its side, and precisely upon that side too on which are the Runic letters? And in addition, the overthrow of this obelisk proves that some supernatural being has been here; no human person could have moved it, save one man's——"

"My poor guide, you are again giving way to your fancies. Who knows whether this stone has not been in this position for the last century?"

"It is more than one hundred and fifty years certainly since Shœnning wrote," said Spiagudry, more calmly; "but no, it has been recently moved—see, the place where it stood is still damp."

But Ordener impatiently dragged him away, and endeavoured by kind words to soothe his terrors. "Listen, my old friend," said he, "you can, after getting the reward for the head of Han, come and settle down by the side of the lake, and pursue your archæological studies."

"You are right, master, but do not speak of your victory as certain. I will, however, give you some advice which will help you in your conflict with the monster."

"Advice! of what kind?"

"The brigand," whispered Spiagudry, turning an uneasy look about him, "bears at his belt a skull, out of which it is his custom to drink. This skull is that of his son, for the mutilation of whose body I am now a fugitive."

"Raise your voice, and fear nothing; I can hardly catch your words. And this skull?"

"You must try and get hold of it; the monster has a superstitious feeling concerning it. With the skull of his son in your hands, you can bend him to your will."

"But how am I to obtain possession of it?"

"By stratagem, master; perhaps during his sleep."

"That is enough; your good advice can be of no service to me, for I cannot attack a sleeping enemy."

"Master, master, how do we know that the Archangel Michael did not use strategy to overcome Satan?" Here Spiagudry again started violently. "Oh, heavens what is that—is it not a little man in the path in front of us?"

"I see nothing," answered Ordener.

"Nothing, master. Ah! but the path turns round that rock. Do not go further, I entreat you. May Saint Hospice watch over us!"

"You have seen the shadow of an owl," said Ordener, "and taken it for a man."

"I thought that I saw some one; but it was the moonlight, no doubt, that deceived me. It was the moonlight that caused Baldan, Lord of Merneugh, to take a white curtain for the ghost of his mother, and induced him to go next day to the judges of Christiana, and confess himself a matricide, and so save the life of the page who had been condemned for the murder."

Spiagudry was always ready to forget the present in the past, and so the story of Baldan drove his fears from his mind.

But now they had reached the ruined walls which surrounded the summit of the rock, which in many cases were in a state of utter decay, and through a fissure in which the travellers managed to make their way, for the postern gate was blocked up with masses of fallen stone. The only tower which remained erect was situated at the other end of the platform which formed the summit of the rock, and it was from the top of this, that according to Spiagudry, the lights of Munkholm could be seen. The moon had entirely disappeared behind a dark cloud, and they were passing through a breach in the inner wall of the castle, when Benignus stopped short, and once more grasped Ordener's arm.

"What is it now?" asked Ordener.

Benignus, without answering, grasped him harder, and motioned him to keep silence. At last he whispered in a voice tremulous with terror:

"What do you say now, master? Do you not repent of having come here?"

"Not at all, and I hope to go further. Why should I repent?"

"What, did you not see?"

"See! I saw nothing."

"Not behind that wall in the dark shadow, two eyes glaring like comets and fixed upon us?"

"On my word, I did not."

"You did not see them move about, mount, descend and then disappear amongst the ruins?"

"I do not know what you mean. Besides, what does it signify?"

"Signify? Why, do you not know that there is only one man in Norway whose eyes blaze like that in the dark?"

"Come, come, who is this man with cat's eyes? Is it Han again? All the better. He will spare us a journey to Walderhog."

"But, my master, you promised that I should be left in safety in the village of Suib, a mile from all danger."

The kind and considerate heart of Ordener fathered his secret feelings. He smiled and replied:

"You are right, old man. It would be unjust to make you take part in my danger; but fear not, you fancy that you see Han of Iceland everywhere. Is it not much more likely that it was the eye of a wild cat that you saw shine in those ruins?"

For the fifth time Spiagudry allowed his fears to take wing, and without another word they entered the tower. The guardian of the dead heaped a quantity of

dried leaves together, and, striking a light, in a very short time a clear flame rose, which clearly showed all the objects around them. Only the circular walls of the tower remained. The floors of the four storeys had fallen, a narrow spiral staircase, without any protecting rail, wound round the interior of the wall, and led to the battlements. At the first blaze of light a number of screech owls and ospreys appeared, and uttered wild and discordant cries, whilst huge bats hovered over the flames, which they appeared to fan with their ash-coloured wings.

"The inhabitants of the tower receive us gaily enough," remarked Ordener. "How is it you are not frightened at them?"

"What?" answered Spiagudry. "Do you think that I am alarmed at an owl or a bat? I live amongst dead bodies, and I do not dread vampires. I fear only the living I allow that I am not courageous, but I certainly am not superstitious; but, master, let us think of supper."

Ordener could think only of Munkholm.

"I have some food here," continued Spiagudry, drawing his knapsack from under his cloak, "and if your appetite equals mine, this black bread and dry cheese will soon come to an end. It is not much of a repast, but it is better than nothing. I daresay there are nests of gulls and pheasants at the top of the tower, but the road is too break-neck to think of getting their eggs."

"Well," answered Ordener, "break-neck or not, I am going up it."

"What, master? For the sake of a few eggs do not attempt to commit such an act of imprudence; besides, you may be deceived, and only bring down screech owls' eggs."

"Do not think that I am going birds' nesting; but

tell me, is it from the top of this tower that I can see Munkholm?"

"Certainly. Ah, now I see. You wish to settle some disputed topographical point; but, remember, even for the sake of science, you must not be rash. I entreat you, do not risk your life upon that dangerous staircase, which would hardly support a crow."

But Ordener had made up his mind.

"Well, if you will be rash, you will; but do not stay up long, and keep a firm hold of the ivy both going up and descending." As he spoke Ordener threw aside his cloak and began the perilous ascent.

"And now," muttered Spiagudry, "now that the eye of that young lynx is off me, let me see what is in this casket, and take possession *oculis et manu* of the treasure that it, no doubt, contains. It is locked, of course, but a stone will act as a key, and should anyone, tempted by the miserable four crowns that the Syndic has offered, endeavour to take me, I can ransom myself, and so this casket will prove a means of safety."

He selected a heavy stone, and was about to shatter the fastenings of the casket, when a slight sound caused him to raise his eyes. In an instant an indescribable expression of anguish passed over his face, his limbs trembled violently, his eyes stared wildly, and he was unable to articulate a sound, for facing him at the other side of the fire, with his arms crossed and his hand resting upon the handle of a stone axe, stood a little man with a red beard, clothed in skins stained in many places with blood, with his piercing eyes fixed savagely upon his.

"Yes, it is I," said the little man. "And so the casket would be a means of safety, would it? Spiagudry," he added, with a bitter smile, "is this the road to Thoctree?"

The terrified man in vain endeavoured to reply.

"Thoctree—my master—I was going there——"

"You were going to Walderhog," replied the other in a voice of thunder.

Frantic with fear, Spiagudry endeavoured to make a negative sign.

"You were leading an enemy to me; but that matters not—it will be but one man less in the world. Fear not, faithful guide, he shall follow *you*." The unhappy guardian of the dead tried to utter a cry for help; but only a low moan issued from his lips.

"Why are you alarmed at my presence? You were seeking me. Listen—one cry, and you are a dead man," and he brandished the axe over his head, whilst he continued in a voice resembling the torrent as it bursts from a cavern, "You have betrayed me!"

"No, your grace—your excellency," stammered the other.

The little man uttered a hollow roar.

"You are again trying to deceive me. Listen. *I* was on the roof of the Spladgest when you made the agreement with that young madman; it was *I* whose voice you heard twice; it was *I* whom you again heard in the storm; it was *I* you saw in the Tower of Vyglā. I would not let those soldiers of the regiment of Munkholm escape. You *I* could always find. It was *I* that you saw under the miner's hat at Oëlmoe; it was *I* whose voice you heard, and whose form you saw, as you ascended this path, and *I* am here before you!"

Maddened by his fears, Spiagudry rolled at the feet of his inexorable judge, crying in a stifled voice, "Mercy."

"The casket will secure your safety," answered the other with an ironical laugh.

"Mercy, my lord, mercy."

"I warned you to be faithful and silent. Faithful you have not been, but silent you shall be for the future!"

The unhappy man recognised the hideous hidden

meaning that lurked behind these words, and uttered a hollow groan.

"Fear nothing," said Han; "I will not separate you from your treasure," and, unloosing his leather belt, he passed it through the handle of the casket, which he fastened round Spiagudry's neck, who bent with the weight.

"Now," said the little man, "to what fiend do you wish to confide your soul? Quick, or some other demon may seize it before you have made up your mind."

Spiagudry embraced his knees, with a thousand words and gestures of terror and affright.

"No," cried Han. "Listen, faithful Spiagudry. Do not grieve at leaving your young companion without a guide, for he shall follow you, I swear it. You are only going before to show him the way." And seizing the miserable wretch in his grasp, as a tiger seizes a long serpent, he dragged him out of the tower.

After many narrow escapes, Ordener had succeeded in reaching the battlements of the tower, and fixed his eyes upon a luminous point which gleamed red upon the horizon. It was the beacon on the watch-tower of Munkholm; and a heavenly joy spread through his bosom as he gazed upon the spot that held her who was so dear to him. "She is there," murmured he; "she sleeps, little knowing that her Ordener is gazing in her direction. Her Ordener, who carries the lock of her hair upon his heart. Ah! may we soon be reunited." As his thoughts thus wandered far away, a piercing shriek, followed by a burst of demoniacal laughter, struck upon his ear, and, glancing down, he saw by the light of the fire that the interior of the tower was deserted. Heedless of the dangers of the way, he hurried down, but scarcely had he reached the ground when he heard the sound as of a heavy body striking the deep waters of the lake far beneath.

CHAPTER XXII.

HAN AT HOME.

THE traveller who passes over the snow-covered mountains which surround Lake Smiasen will not find a vestige of the Ruins of Arbar, so called by the Norwegians of the 17th century. For what purpose the original building had been erected, if so it could be called, or by whom constructed, were things quite unknown. On leaving the forest, south of the lake, after climbing an incline, jotted here and there with the remains of walls and towers, an arched opening pierces the side of the mountain. This chasm, which is now entirely obstructed by landslips, was then the entrance to a kind of gallery hollowed out of solid rock, and going right through the mountain. This gallery, which was faintly lighted by loopholes placed at equal distances in the roof, ended in a kind of oblong room formed partly out of the rock, and the rest finished in the roughest style of architecture. Round this room were deep niches, in which were figures clumsily sculptured. Some had fallen pell-mell on the slabs amid other ruins, and lay covered with herbs and moss, over which crawled the lizard, the spider, and frightful insects, all taking their birth in decay.

The only light came through the door at the mouth of the gallery. This door had on one side a pointed arch, roughly hewn, without date, and seen from a level, it looked like a window over-

looking an immense precipice, with three or four steps projecting over the abyss. Why these were there no one could tell. This room formed the interior of a gigantic tower, and seen from afar on the side of the precipice appeared to be but one of the points of the mountain. Overhead was a mass so distant that it could be taken for a misshapen rock, or the ruins of a colossal arch. The peasants called this tower and arch the Ruins of Arbar, without knowing the reason for the name.

Seated on a stone in the centre of the room, with his back to the midday sun, which seemed but twilight in this gloomy tower, was the little man often before mentioned, leaning over an object, scarcely perceptible in the semi-light, but from the slight movement, and the feeble groans that could be heard, the sounds seemed to come from a living body. From time to time the little man took long draughts from a goblet, formed of a human skull.

"Some one is in the gallery," said he, rising hastily. "Can it be the chancellor of two kingdoms already?"

A burst of laughter followed these words, and ending in a savage roar, which was taken up by a howl from the gallery.

"Oh, oh!" said the denizen of the ruins, "this is no man, but an enemy for all that—a wolf."

Suddenly a wolf appeared with fiery eyes, and crept stealthily towards the man, who stood with folded arms watching him.

"How do you do, wolf? Your eyes are bright. You are hungry, then, and the scent of a corpse attracts you. Only fancy what an attraction you will soon prove to famished wolves. You are welcome, for I have often longed to see you, and you are so old that it is now thought that nothing will kill you. That will not be said to-morrow."

The animal backed a step, and sprung on the man with a frightful howl.

Quick as lightning with one hand he seized the wolf, who had grasped his shoulders with his claws, and with the other, to protect his face from the animal's open jaws, he caught hold of it by the throat, and with such force that the wolf threw up its head with a cry of pain.

"Wolf of Smiasen, you are destroying my jacket, and I must really replace it by something, and that will be your skin."

He was just adding some jargon to his shout of victory, when the wolf jerked convulsively, and threw them both, and the man's cries were mingled with the wolf's howls.

Compelled to release the animal's throat, the little man soon felt its sharp teeth in his shoulder, and rolling over one another, the combatants pushed against an enormous white mass lying in the darkest part of the room.

A bear, awakened from his slumbers, rose growling, but as soon as he could distinguish what was going on, he rushed forward with fury, not on the man, but on the wolf, who had then the best of it, and seizing him violently, he freed the adversary with the human face.

The man rose, covered with blood. Far from being grateful for such a service, he treated the bear as a man does his dog who has committed a fault—kicked him.

"Friend, who asked you to interfere?" said he furiously. "Be off!"

The bear, who, in addition to being kicked by the one opponent, had felt the teeth of the other, now moaned plaintively and retired. The wolf, thus released, again attacked the man.

The bear remained quietly in his place, stroking his face with his paws, and looking on with the utmost indifference.

The little man first seized the wolf by the muzzle, and then caught him violently by the throat. The animal, in his desperate struggles for release, foamed at the mouth; his eyes appeared to be starting out of his head.

Of the two adversaries, he whose bones were splintered by teeth, whose skin was torn by nails, was not the man, but the wild beast; the savage expressions and the frightful howling did not come from the beast, but the man.

Weakened by the long resistance, Han made a last effort, and grasping the animal violently by the muzzle, so much so that blood poured from nose and mouth, the wolf fell at his conqueror's feet, with eyes partly closed, shortly after gave one convulsive movement, and expired.

"So you are dead?" said the little man, kicking the body contemptuously. "Did you think to live after meeting me? You won't break through the snow again in quest of prey. It will now be the turn of wolves and vultures to take their share of you. What travellers you must have murdered, during your long life of bloodshed. Now you lie dead, and you will never devour any more. What a pity!"

Taking a sharp flint, he soon dismembered the wolf, and covered himself in the animal's warm and bleeding skin, turned inside out, thus keeping his bleeding shoulders, torn by the wolf's fangs, out of sight.

"I must use the skin of beasts," muttered he, "as man's is too thin to protect me from the cold."

He thus meditated, looking more hideous than his hideous trophy. The bear, tired of inactivity, slyly

advanced towards the object before mentioned, and soon was heard the sound of grinding teeth, mingled with faint moans.

"Friend!" cried the man threateningly. "Ah, you wretched Friend, come here, I say!"

He threw a large stone at the monster's head, who at once rose from his feast, licking his red lips, and came ambling towards his master, though giddy from the blow. When he had gained the man's feet, he raised his head, pleading pardon in his way for an indiscretion.

Sounds from the two monsters could now be heard. The host of the Ruins of Arbar well deserved the title. The man's voice expressed power and anger, while the bear's growling denoted submission and pleading.

"You take your prey," said the man, pointing to the wolf, "and leave me mine."

The bear, after smelling his share, turned away discontentedly.

"I quite understand you," said the man; "your prey being quite dead; is not according to your taste. You prefer my share, as it still breathes. Friend, like man, you only care for the living, that you may destroy it. What you cause to suffer you revel in. In that we are alike, for I am not a man, Friend. I am above that low race. I am a wild beast like yourself. Companion Friend, I wish you could speak, just to tell me if your joy equals mine when you devour a man. Yet I should hardly care to hear you speak; it would only remind me of the human voice. Roar at my feet. The sound that strikes terror over the mountain, to me it is a friendly voice, for it ever warns me of the approach of an enemy. Friend, lick my hands with the tongue that has so often drank human blood. Your teeth are white like mine. Not our fault, though, we have tried hard enough to stain them red.

Blood but cleanses blood, it seems. I have seen young girls paddling in the water and singing sweetly. In preference to their melodious voices and soft skins I like to hear your hoarse cries, and shaggy-looking jaws, for they terrify man."

While thus speaking, he allowed the monster to lick his hand, and show him all the affection a pet spaniel lavishes on his mistress.

The animal listened with the utmost attention while his master was speaking, more particularly when he brought in strange words. The animal then at once lifted his head, and to show he understood, he growled out some confused sound.

"Men say I shun them, but it is they who shun me from fear. What they do from fear, I do from hatred. Yet, Friend, you know I do like to meet a man sometimes—that is, when I am hungry and thirsty."

Suddenly a red light appeared in the gallery.

"Why, here is one. Well, speak of the Devil and you see his horns. Up, Friend, I must reward your obedience by satisfying your appetite."

Turning to a mass on the ground, he used his hatchet, and soon the crunching of bones was heard, but this time the form neither sighed nor moaned. Throwing aside what he had detached, he added:

"There, my Friend, finish your feast; there are but two now living in this room." The bear rushed eagerly on to his prey, which appeared to be a human arm, covered in the uniform of the Munkholm musketeers.

"Companion Friend, leave me alone, for some one is coming. Now be off," said he, as the light gradually approached. The monster obeyed, made for the door with his revolting prey, and disappeared down the steps, with a howl of satisfaction.

A man of moderate height now came forward,

covered in a long brown cloak, and carrying a dark lantern, whose light he turned upon the little man.

He was still seated, with his arms crossed, and said:

"You are unwelcome, for you are not guided by instinct, but by human interests."

The stranger made no reply, but looked at him attentively.

"Look on," said he, raising his head. "Why, in an hour's time you won't have voice enough left even to boast you have seen me."

The newcomer was more surprised than alarmed, and continued to cast the light of the lantern full on his strange host's face.

"Well, why are you so astonished?" said he, with a hoarse laugh, "I have arms and legs, unlike yours, for my limbs will never furnish food for vultures."

"Listen," said the stranger, sinking his voice; "I am not come as an enemy, but as a friend."

"Why then come in man's form?"

"I wish to serve you, if you are the man I want."

"In other words," said the little man, "you want me to render you a service? Man, you are wasting time. I can only serve those who are tired of life."

"Judging from your words," said the stranger, "you are the man I want. Yet Han of Iceland is a giant. You cannot be he?"

"This is the first time anyone, to my face, has doubted it!"

"Then you are the man, but Han of Iceland is of immense height."

"Add my height to my fame, and I shall be taller than Hecla."

"You are, then, Han of Iceland?"

"I shall not answer your question," said the little man with such a look that the stranger drew back.

"Do not look at me like that," said he, almost

beseechingly, and glancing towards the end of the gallery, half regretting he had ventured. "Your interests bring me here."

"My interest?" said the monster, rising and showing his tiger-like face, his bleeding shoulders now barely covered with the still warm skin, his enormous hands armed with huge nails, and, at the sight, the stranger trembled, as a traveller who thinks he but touches an eel, and finds himself bitten by a viper.

"Have you come to tell me to poison a spring, or to burn a village down, or to strangle some Munkholm musketeer?"

"Listen!" said the stranger, "perhaps I have. The miners in Norway are in open revolt. You know what a revolution entails?"

"Yes. Murder! Violence! Sacrilege! Fire! Pillage!"

"Well, I offer you all these."

"I don't want your offer. I can take them all," said the little man, with such laughter that the stranger again trembled, but he continued:

"In the name of the insurgents, I offer you the supreme command of their forces."

The little man was for a moment silent. Then with an expression of deep malice, he said:

"Is it truly in their name you offer it?"

The new-comer was somewhat disconcerted, but certain of being unknown, he soon recovered himself.

"Why are the miners in revolt?" said the little man.

"To free themselves from the king's tax."

"What, only for that?" said the other mockingly.

"Also to free the prisoner at Munkholm."

"That is, then, their sole object?" answered he, in such a tone that the stranger was much confused.

"I know of no other," stammered he.

"Ah! you know of no other."

To put an end to this, the stranger drew forth a purse, and threw it at the monster's feet, saying:

"There is your pay as commander."

"I don't want it," said he, kicking away the purse.

"Do you think if I wanted your blood or your gold, I should wait for your permission?"

The stranger, surprised, answered somewhat timidly:

"The miners have sent you that as a present."

"I don't want it. I tell you, gold is useless to me, for men will sell their souls, but they will not sell their lives, so we take them."

"I will, then, tell the miners that Han of Iceland accepts the command?"

"I do not accept it."

"What?" asked the miners' pretended envoy, "you refuse to take part in an expedition, which, to you, offers such advantages?"

"But I can ruin and murder peasants and soldiers alone."

"Yes, but with the miners you are free from all consequences."

"And you assert this still in the miners' name?" said the other, laughing.

"In the name of a great person," said the stranger mysteriously, "who is interested in the rebellion."

"And is this all-powerful person sure he will not be hanged?"

"If you but knew to whom I allude."

"Well, who is it?"

"That I cannot tell you."

Striking the stranger on the shoulder, the little man said with a laugh:

"Shall I tell you?"

The stranger was struck both with fear and disgust.

"There, I am having a game with you," said the

man. "Why I know everything. This mighty person is the Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway, and that is yourself."

The grand chancellor had hoped to gain over the brigand without being recognised, and he never after discovered how Han of Iceland had been so well informed. Had Musdæmon betrayed him? He had certainly suggested the visit, but what could he gain by such treachery? Perhaps the brigand had found some papers on one of his victims. No one but Musdæmon and Frederic d'Ahlefeld knew of the plan, and Frederic, though frivolous in other things, would be secret in such a matter, and besides, thought the chancellor, he is stationed at Munkholm. But after a moment's surprise, Count d'Ahlefeld regained his presence of mind.

"I will be frank with you. I am the Chancellor. Now, be equally frank with me?"

"Did I require much begging?" said the other with a laugh, "either to tell you my name or your own?"

"Tell me," said the count, "how you knew it?"

"Have you not heard I can see across mountains?"

"You see in me a friend," insisted the count.

"Give me your hand, Count d'Ahlefeld. Now if our two souls were to take flight, Satan would be puzzled to decide which of us is the monster."

The haughty lord bit his lips, but gave no other sign of his displeasure, as he wished to make the brigand his tool, though at the same time he was frightened of him.

"Be leader of the insurgents; don't play with your own interests, and trust to my gratitude."

"Chancellor of Norway, you reckon on the success of your enterprise, as an old woman does of the dress she is weaving from stolen flax, little thinking that the cat's claws have already entangled the thread."

"Before you refuse again, I urge you to reflect."

"Then once again I—the brigand—I tell you no! Chancellor of two kingdoms."

"Judging from the great service you have rendered me, I expected another answer."

"What service?"

"Did you not murder Captain Dispolsen?"

"That maybe, Count d'Ahlefeld. Who is this captain? I don't know him."

"Do you mean to tell me that the iron casket in his charge has not fallen into your hands?"

Somewhat struck, the brigand answered:

"I certainly remember a man with an iron casket at the Sands of Urechtal."

"Let me have that casket, and my gratitude shall know no bounds."

The brigand seemed astonished at the persistence of the noble minister.

"Chancellor of Norway, this box then contains matters of great importance to your Grace?"

"Yes."

"What will you give me if I tell you where to find it?"

"Everything you can wish, Han of Iceland."

"Well, then, I will not tell you."

"Think of the service you will render me."

"That is precisely what I am thinking about."

"I will plead to the king for a free pardon for you, and you shall have wealth untold."

"You had better ask for your own pardon, Grand Chancellor of Denmark and Norway. Now listen. Tigers do not attack hyenas, so you shall leave here alive, for I know that in every thought of your soul, in every moment of your life, you are planning for man's misery, and adding a fresh crime to yourself—so go. But don't return, for my hatred spares no man, not

even a criminal. You think I killed the captain on your account. Why, his uniform condemned him; nor was it to render you a service I strangled this other wretch," added the brigand, drawing the count to the body lying in the shadow, the light from the lantern being thrown on the corpse of a man whose flesh was all bleeding and torn, in the uniform of the Munkholm musketeers. The chancellor, struck with horror, could now see the face covered in blood, with eyes upturned, where no light would ever shine again, and the mouth partly open, with its lips all blue. The count gave a piercing cry:

"Oh, God! it is Frederic, my son!"

However much the heart may be hardened, hidden amidst passion and vice, there is affection for something, a mysterious witness and a future avenger. One would say it remained in the heart, that crime should one day feel what anguish meant; but it bides its time. No ordinary misfortunes can affect the wicked and the selfish. Let them unexpectedly have some deep grief, then it eats into their very soul, and affection, to them a feeling until then quite unknown, will assert itself, and with all the more violence from having been ignored, with all the greater pain from its want of sensibility up to the very time; but the sting has to probe deeply. Nature will assert itself, and what the wretched creature has scoffed at for years, is now to him acute suffering, and in his utter despair he sees but hell in life itself.

Without knowing it, Count d'Ahlefeld loved his son. We may call him his son, as he was ignorant of his wife's adultery, and he looked upon Frederic as his son and heir.

Believing him to be at Munkholm, the father's agony can hardly be described at finding his son in the Tower of Arbar, lying bathed in blood—dead, beyond

all doubt. The love for his son rose in greater force from the feeling that, in this world, he was lost to him for ever.

He wrung his hands in despair, crying :

"My son, my son !"

The brigand laughed. It was fearful to hear the sounds of laughter mingled with the father's groans over the dead body of his son.

"By my ancestor Ingulphus you can cry, Count d'Ablefeld—you will never awake him," and in a changed voice he added gloomily : "Cry over your son, I have avenged mine."

Suddenly four men, with drawn swords, rushed forward, followed by a short man in a brown cloak, with a torch and a sword in his hand. This man was Musdæmon, and four of the count's suite.

"My lord," said he, "we heard you, and hastened to your relief."

The newcomers, by the strong light from the torch, now with horror saw the frightful spectacle. The remains of the wolf lay bleeding at one side and the disfigured body of the young officer on the other, and the father leaning over the corpse with haggard face and crying in his despair, the brigand standing in the midst in all his hideousness. On seeing this reinforcement the count called for vengeance :

"Death to this brigand ! He has murdered my son ! Death ! death ! I say !"

"Murdered Lord Frederic ?" said Musdæmon, quite unmoved.

The six men rushed on the brigand, the count still crying :

"Death ! death ! I say !"

Surprised at the sudden attack, Han retreated to the outlet overlooking the precipice, giving a wild roar, which denoted far more rage than fear. He looked

more threatening with his stone hatchet, than his aggressors, though fully armed. He kept them all at bay, for the hatchet seemed to move like lightning, and parried every blow that was aimed at him; but his late encounter with the wolf had weakened him, and he was fast losing ground, for he was now at the very edge of the abyss.

"Courage, my friends," cried the count, "we shall soon throw him over."

"Before I fall, look out for the planets doing so!" cried the brigand, as he took one step backwards over the precipice.

His adversaries pressed forward, the count urging them with the words:

"Courage, my friends! One more effort and he is done with. Ah! wretch, you have committed your last crime."

The brigand still continued to use his hatchet. At last he took a horn from his belt, and blew several blasts. A reply soon came, for a loud roar rose from the abyss; and just as the little man took another step down the stair overhanging the precipice, the enormous head of a white bear appeared behind him. For a moment the assailants withdrew in surprise and fear. The bear advanced, and, with his blood-stained mouth, confronted the foes.

"Thanks, my brave Friend," cried the brigand; "let us profit by their discomfiture," and he jumped on the bear's back, who at once descended backwards, thus facing his master's enemies.

They now tried to roll heavy stones after the bear, who was descending with his burden by grasping trunks of trees and pieces of projecting rock, but, before the men could hurl a heavy block they were about to raise, the brigand and the beast had disappeared in a cave.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THRUST AND PARRY.

THE day after the Governor of Drontheim had received his orders he called for his carriage early, hoping to escape a visit from the Countess of d'Ahlefeld. He was on the point of starting when the noble lady was announced. The old soldier could well stand fire, but not a woman's artifices. Still intent on leaving, he made his adieux to the wicked countess, hoping to escape anything further.

"Well, noble general, what did he say?" said the countess in an affected, confidential manner.

"Who? Poël? He said the carriage was waiting."

"I am talking of the Munkholm prisoner."

"Ah!"

"Has he replied satisfactorily?"

"But—yes—really, countess," said the confused general.

"Have you proofs of his complicity with the miners?"

"Noble lady," exclaimed Levin, "he is innocent," he stopped short, for he had only expressed his own convictions.

"Innocent!" said the countess in consternation, for she feared Schumacher had proved his innocence to the general, and his guilt was all important to the grand chancellor.

The governor had not time to reflect, so he answered hesitatingly:

"Innocent, yes, if you wish."

"I wish, milord general," said she laughing.

"Noble countess," said he, annoyed at her laughter, "to the viceroy alone will I give the details of my interview with the ex-grand chancellor," and with a profound bow he left.

"Yes, go," said the countess to herself, on her return home. "Your absence delivers us from one of our enemy's protectors. Your departure is the signal for my Frederic's return. Fancy sending the handsomest cavalier in Copenhagen, to those horrible mountains, but I can now have him recalled. "Lisbeth," said she, addressing her favourite attendant, "mind you have two dozen combs such as dandies wear in their hair, and Scudèry's last novel. My dear son's monkey is to be washed every morning in rose water."

"My gracious mistress, will Lord Frederic then return?"

"Yes, I must fulfil his wishes, so that he may be pleased to see me; besides, I want to surprise him."

Poor mother!



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FISHERMAN'S HUT.

ORDENER left the tower, whence he could see the beacon of Munkholm, tired out with seeking his poor guide, Benignus Spiagudry. Echo alone answered his repeated calls. How he blamed himself for leaving him. So he determined to pass the night on the rocks in case his guide should return.

After a slight refreshment he lay down near the little fire that remained, and soon fell asleep, pressing Ethel's hair to his lips. Sleep comes early to one with a clear conscience.

At sunrise, after a long search, he found Spiagudry's cloak and wallet, showing he had left in haste; so, despairing to find him, he now quitted the rock, to keep his appointment with Han of Iceland at Walderhog on the morrow.

He wanted no guide to find the brigand, as he knew the North of Norway well. He travelled a whole day across the mountains, which run from north to south of Norway. Such a country is far from easy to cross, and Ordener for hours would not meet a living creature. At last, however, he encountered a peasant, who reluctantly gave him some information.

"The Grotto of Walderhog—the stones dance, the bones dance, the Devil of Iceland lives there. Surely, you don't mean Walderhog, do you?"

"I really do."

"Have you, then, lost your mother, or is your farm burnt down, or has your neighbour stolen your fat pig?"

"No," said the young man.

"You have, then, been bewitched?"

"My good man, I have asked you the way to Walderhog."

"I am replying, milord. Adieu, you will find it to the north, but I doubt if you will return," and the peasant left him, making the sign of the cross.

It was night when the young traveller reached Suib, where Spingudry had wished him to make his head-quarters. From the smell of tar and charcoal, he knew he was amongst fishermen, and through the door or rather outlet of the hut, covered with a large fish's skin, he could distinguish fire. Knocking, he cried, "It is a traveller."

"Come in, come in," said a voice, lifting up the fish's skin.

Orderer found himself in a round cabin, built of wood and clay. And seated near the fire he saw a fisherman with his wife and two children; on the other side were two deer on a bed of leaves and skins, fast asleep amid the nets and oars. Both man and wife greeted him kindly, for the Norwegian peasants are glad to see a traveller, partly from curiosity, and also from their love of hospitality.

They hastened to offer him salt fish flavoured with whale oil, and some black bread, adding he should soon have game, if he remained till the return of their brother, a great sportsman.

"Many thanks, my kind hostess, I will content myself with your salt fish and black bread, as I must soon be off."

"You are young to venture across the mountains at this hour?"

"My business is most urgent."

When Norwegian peasants want to know a stranger's name, they at once begin by telling their own.

"You are now with Christopher Buldus Braal and Maare Kennybol his wife."

"And I," said Ordener, "am a traveller, neither sure of his name, nor of his way."

"I thought there was but one man in Norway who was not sure of his name—the noble Baron of Thorwick, who will shortly be called Count Danneskiold, on his marriage with the chancellor's daughter. At least so it is said at Drontheim."

"I doubt it," said Ordener.

"Has anything fresh occurred during the last six days?"

"I believe so," replied the young man smiling. And the conversation here became somewhat embarrassing, until the arrival of the brother.

"There," said he, throwing a wood hen on the table, "I have been all this time, and found nothing but that wretched bird; why it is not worth a shot from my musket!" but added: "Kennybol's faithful musket will soon have tougher game, and pierce the green jackets."

"You are talking of green jackets," said the fisherman, "they say down the village, there is a revolt amongst the miners. Brother, do you know anything of it?"

"Silence," said the mountaineer, glancing at the stranger.

"You shall soon have some bear's fat to flavour your fish," added he, "for about two miles from Suib, I saw a white one, carrying a man, or rather an animal, and the strangest part of it was, he was carrying his prey on his back, and not, as usual, in his jaws. The animal lay so still on the bear, that it must have been dead, for it made no effort to defend itself."

"Where did you see the bear?" asked the fisherman.

"Going towards Smiasen near Walderhog."

"You are not going there," said the woman, terrified.

"Not I, my friend, a grotto where——?"

They all three made the sign of the cross.

"My good hosts, what is there so alarming in this grotto at Walderhog, for it is precisely there I am going?"

"Good heavens! To Walderhog, and he speaks of it with the same coolness as we should of going out herring fishing, or to sell cod."

"What motive can you have to venture to such a place?" said the mountaineer.

"I have enquiries to make of some one."

"You will find no human being there. It is inhabited by Belzebub himself."

"I heard that Han of Iceland lived there."

"That is the Devil," cried the three with horror.

"The greatest kindness you can do," said Ordener, "is to show me the shortest way there. I am seeking the brigand for interests not my own."

"Is it not for Count Schumacher of Griffenfeld? If so I wish you every success. You are a brave fellow thus to try and serve the oppressed."

With regard to the inhabitant of Walderhog, I trust you will be successful in your negotiations. I am also devoted to the prisoner of Munkholm," said Kennybol, and turning to the fisherman he further added:

"Brother and sister, treat this young man as a brother: I think supper must be ready."

"You have then persuaded him to give up his visit to the Devil," said the woman.

"Sister, he is a noble and worthy young man. Pray that no harm may befall him."

"Come, and take something with us, and then rest yourself," said he to Ordener. "To-morrow, I will show you the way, and we will go together, you for your devil, and I for my bear."

CHAPTER XXV.

AXE AND SABRE.

A FISHERMAN, who at sunrise was casting his nets, suddenly saw a figure, either wrapped in a cloak or a shroud, disappear into the dreaded grotto of Walderhog. It was Ordener.

Onward he went, passing from one scene to another, from King Walder's tomb, with its many fearful traditions, to a heap of skulls and jaws. At length he came to the room at the end of the grotto, where he found a singular monument, composed of three long stones, one over another, supporting one large and square. On this was placed a block of granite, with a hole in the centre, which formed a kind of altar, the very weight of the stones keeping them in their place.

As the young man leant on this altar, steeped in human blood, he wondered the brigand had not appeared.

Suddenly a voice, seemingly from the stone, struck on his ear:

"Young man, you were treading on your own grave when you entered here," and a faint echo took up the words.

A hideous head covered with red hair, and laughing horribly, now rose from the other side of the altar.

"Young man, again I say, you are treading on your own grave."

Grasping his sword, Ordener replied:

"I can handle a sword."

The monster now showed himself, in all his hideousness, armed with his stone hatchet.

"It is I!" said he, growling like a wild beast.

"It is I!" said Ordener.

"I was waiting for you."

"I was doing more, for I was seeking you."

"Do you know who I am?" said the brigand, crossing his arms.

"Yes."

"You felt no fear in coming here?" asked the monster triumphantly.

"Only that of not meeting you."

"So you are braving me. Why, on the way your very feet knocked against human skulls."

"To-morrow they may kick yours."

"Beware," added the brigand angrily; "I will treat you as Norwegian hail does a traveller, by falling on you."

Ordener's very look for a moment influenced the monster.

"You teach me what pity means."

"You, the meaning of contempt."

"Child, your face and voice are like a girl's. Now, what death have you chosen?"

"Yours."

"I am a demon, with the soul of Ingulphus the Exterminator."

"I know you are a brigand, and only murder for gold."

"There you are wrong. I do it for blood."

"Why, you were paid to murder Captain Dispolsen by the d'Ahlfelds."

"What are you saying? What names are those?"

"You don't know the name of Captain Dispolsen, whom you murdered on Urchtal sands?"

"Most likely. I don't remember him. I shall have forgotten you in three days."

"And you don't know Count d'Ahlefeld, who paid you to get possession of the iron casket?"

"D'Ahlefeld; yes. I ought to know him, for I drank his son's blood out of my own son's skull."

"You were not content then with gold?" said Ordener, horrified.

"What gold?"

"The very sight of you oppresses me. Now listen. Eight days ago you stole an iron casket from one of your victims, a Munkholm musketeer."

"A Munkholm officer," said the monster, grinding his teeth. "Are you then also one?"

"No."

"More is the pity."

"Again, I say, where is the casket you stole from the captain?"

"There is much concern about this iron box; your own bones will be less sought after, if they are ever gathered in a coffin, is doubtful."

"Tell me what you have done with the casket?" for Ordener plainly saw that the brigand remembered it. "Has Count d'Ahlefeld had it?"

"No."

"You lie, for you are laughing."

"Believe what you like! What do I care?"

"You shall give me up that casket?" said the young man firmly.

The monster, with a laugh, replied:

"Are you accustomed to order bears?"

"I will order the devil, even in hell."

"Then you will very soon be able to do that."

"Obey," said Ordener, drawing his sword.

"As soon as you entered," said the other, brandishing his hatchet, "I could have smashed your bones and

drank your blood; but I was curious to see how the sparrow would pounce upon the vulture."

"Wretch, defend yourself!"

"It is the first time I have been told to do so," muttered the brigand, grinding his teeth as he vaulted on to the altar.

Orderer, wrapping his cloak round his left arm, made a thrust with his sword.

The little man, standing on the altar, looked like some horrible idol, to whom sacrifices were offered, in the darker ages. His movements were so rapid, that from whatever point the young man attacked, the monster ever faced him. Useless efforts were made on both sides to get the best of the encounter, when the head of the little man's axe caught in the folds of Orderer's cloak. The more he tried to disengage it, the tighter the cloak twisted round it.

"Listen," said Orderer triumphantly, pressing the point of his sword on the monster's chest. "Give me that iron box you stole!"

"Curse you; no!"

"Reflect."

"No. I tell you, no!"

"Well, then," said the young man, lowering his sword, "free your hatchet and defend yourself?"

The monster laughed disdainfully.

"Child, you are acting generously towards me, as though I wanted it," and placing one foot on his conqueror's shoulder, he bounded to the floor, then springing on to Orderer, he dug his nails into the young man's shoulder, and entwined himself round him, showing a blood-stained mouth and teeth, like those of a wild beast, ready to tear its prey, yet more hideous than the beast; more monstrous than a devil; for he was a man bereft of all that was human.

The stone monument helped Orderer to withstand

the rude shock. Quickly shortening his sword, he plunged it in the brigand's back. The monster soon disengaged himself, and, springing backwards, cast huge stones at his adversary, but he tried in vain to reach him. Sword in hand, Ordener rushed at the little man, who, hurling another block of stone, broke the sword in pieces.

"Have you anything to say to God or the Devil before you die?" said the monster, freeing the hatchet from its entanglement, and trembling with impatience.

"Poor Ethel!"

Suddenly the monster hesitated, for sounds were heard in the distance, men's voices mingled with the plaintive cry of a bear. The brigand listened, then rushed forward, not on Ordener, but towards the glade whence the sounds proceeded. There he saw a large white bear at bay against seven armed hunters.

"Friend! Friend! here I am to the rescue."

Ordener in one of the hunters could, even at that distance, distinguish his guide Kennybol.



CHAPTER XXVI.

FATAL NEWS.

A REGIMENT of Munkholm musketeers marched towards Skongen; their bayonets, in one long line, looked like the scales of a huge serpent.

"Well, captain," said Lieutenant Radmer, a young Danish baron, to old Lory, a soldier of fortune, "what is the matter? Why so sad?"

"I have lost my wealth—my all."

"You can't be worse off than I am. I lost my splendid castle at Radmer and its appendages to Lieutenant Alberick just with one throw of the dice. I am ruined, but none the less gay for all that."

"Lieutenant, you may have lost your castle, but I have lost my dog. You may regain your castle, but I shall never again have my dog Drake. Why, to honour the admiral, I called my dog after him. The poor thing had saved my life during the war. And to think he should have gone through all with me and then to be drowned like a cat in that cursed Drontheim gulf! My poor dog! my brave friend! worthy to die like myself on the battle field."

"Captain, we shall perhaps be fighting to-morrow, so don't be sad."

"Against brigands of miners, devilish mountaineers, stone-cutters and highwaymen. Worthy enemies certainly for a man who has fought under General Schach."

"But their leader is renowned," said Radmer; "a giant, like Goliath; a brigand who drinks human blood; in fact a perfect devil—the famous Han of Iceland."

"I'll wager he can neither use a musket nor carbine with any skill."

Radmer laughed.

"You may laugh. Just fancy crossing swords with pickaxes! Why my brave Drake would have scorned even taking them by the leg."

"Captain Lory, my dear Radmer!" said an officer, quite out of breath, "I am truly horrified, for d'Ahlefeld—the Chancellor's son Frederic, the dandy, the——"

"Well, what is the matter, Captain Bollar? You are quite alarming," said old Lory. "Is it some want of duty on our dandy's part, for which he is put under arrest?"

"Captain Lory, Lieutenant d'Ahlefeld has been devoured alive."

Both men looked at each other, but Radmer burst out laughing, saying: "You were always good at a joke, but this I won't believe."

"I tell you I had it from the colonel."

"Oh," said the baron, still laughing, "how well he plays his part. Did this poor devil make breakfast for a wolf, or luncheon for a buffalo, perhaps supper for a bear?"

"The colonel has received a dispatch saying that the garrison of Walkstrom is retreating towards us before a large body of insurgents, that Lieutenant Frederic d'Ahlefeld was carried away by Han of Iceland into his grotto and there devoured by the monster."

"What, the colonel of the brigands?" cried the old officer.

"This ogre, this vampire, who has carried off and eaten a lieutenant will not require, my brave Lory, to

know the use of a carbine since he can so well use his jaws," added Radmer.

"You are much the same as d'Ahlefeld, Baron Radmer; beware lest you share the same fate."

Radmer laughingly repeated what he considered but a joke to another group of officers.

"You can laugh at such a misfortune, something so truly horrible. We shall then be fighting against wolves and bears with human faces."

"Our regiment is indeed unfortunate. d'Ahlefeld's fearful death, those poor musketeers found at Carcadthymon, Dispolsen's murder, all in so short a time."

"It is beyond belief," said Radmer. "Frederic, who was such a good dancer," and he then remained silent.

Old Lory was much affected by the young lieutenant's death.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SAFE-CONDUCT PROVED.

ORDENER, in trying to follow the brigand, lost his way. Utterly cast down, he dreaded facing Schumacher without giving him any assurance for Ethel's safety, his journey having proved so utterly fruitless. Then he thought of his marriage with Ulrica d'Ahlefeld. Ah! if he could but fly with Ethel. And full of these thoughts, he drew his coat well round him and lay down. Hearing voices, he turned towards the spot and saw by a light then burning a group of men. In another instant all had disappeared. Ordener was not superstitious, but he crossed himself and went to the very spot so lately occupied. A flash of lightning soon solved the mystery. He found himself on the brink of a large pit, and, leaning forward, he could see a brilliant light shining from the depths, and distinctly hear voices. One feeling became paramount, to go down, and besides he would then be sheltered from the rising storm. Ordener, by the light of another flash, saw that bars of iron were placed from side to side to the very bottom of the pit for those to use who were venturesome enough to risk descending this fearful depth. Profiting by the discovery, the young man descended. As he neared the end of his precipitous journey, he was struck with hearing these words:

"Kennybol has not then arrived?" said a voice impatiently. "What can have detained him?"

"We cannot tell, Master Hacket. He was to pass the night at his sister's, Maase Braal, at Suib."

"I keep my appointments," said Hacket. "I promised you Han of Iceland as commander, and here he is. What matters it, friends, Jonas, Norbite, if Kennybol be late? Our forces are strong enough. We have nothing to fear. Have you the flag from Cray with you?"

"Yes," replied several voices.

"Raise the standard! onward to the noble Schumacher's deliverance, the unfortunate Count of Griffenfeld! You have your invincible chief, and here is gold."

"Long live Schumacher!" cried the crowd, and echo caught up the sound.

"I am the friend and confidant of the noble Count of Griffenfeld," continued Hacket. "Friends give me the same confidence. Fortune favours us, for you will reach Drontheim without meeting a single enemy."

"March on, Master Hacket, but Peters saw the whole of the Munkholm regiment coming towards us."

"He has deceived you," said the other, with authority, "the government is yet ignorant of your revolt, and your oppressor, who has been deaf to all your pleadings, the unfortunate Schumacher's oppressor, General Levin of Knud, has left Drontheim to attend the wedding of Ordener Guldenlew with Ulrica d'Ahlefeld."

Judge of Ordener's surprise on hearing names, so deeply interesting to him, pronounced by strangers in such a place. He could hardly believe his ears—that his Ethel's father should excite revolt—be mixed up with Kennybol and Han of Iceland against the king. Was it for this rebel, this hypocrite, that he, the viceroy's son, General Levin's pupil, had sacrificed both his life and his future prospects?

Perhaps the very iron box, which he had risked his life to obtain, only contained secrets affecting this shameful plot. All hope in life seemed to have left him, yet something in the tone and manner of this pretended envoy seemed suspicious, although the unfortunate mountaineers he was sent to deceive, would scarcely detect the hollowness.

"Who will dare to oppose you," continued the envoy, "when you are commanded by the formidable Han of Iceland? you fight for your wives, your children, and for the unhappy nobleman so unjustly imprisoned for twenty years."

"Onward, war to the tyrants!"

"War!" repeated a thousand voices, amid the clanking of arms.

"Stop!" cried Ordener, rushing amongst the insurgents.

"A stranger—death to him! Death!" cried all.

"Wait, wait," cried the envoy, a small man in black. "Who are you?" said he, turning to Ordener.

"Are you afraid?" added he, as Ordener remained silent.

To this jeer the young man coolly answered:

"If your hand were on my heart, instead of these swords, you would find it beats no faster than your own, supposing you have one."

"He is proud; well then let him die," said the man, turning away.

"I ask nothing more at your hands."

"One minute, Master Hacket," said an old man, "these are my quarters, and I alone can decree this man's death."

"Do just as you please, my dear Jonas, provided the spy die."

Turning to Ordener, the old man said: "Who are you that has so audaciously sought us?"

Having no reply, he continued: "So you will not answer? The fox is then unearthed, and can say nothing for himself. Then kill him!"

"My dear Jonas," said Hacket, "let this be Han of Iceland's first exploit."

A sort of giant advanced towards Ordener and asked for a hatchet.

The young man boldly said, "You are not Han of Iceland."

"Death to him! Death to him!" cried Hacket furiously.

Ordener, knowing that his moments were numbered, sought to press once again the tress of Ethel's hair to his lips; in doing so, a paper fell to the ground.

"Seize that packet," said Hacket.

"Good Heavens!" cried Norbite, "why, this is a pass from Christopher Nedlans, our unfortunate comrade, who was executed a week ago for coining."

"Keep your paper," said Hacket, "Han of Iceland, despatch your man."

"This man is under my protection," said Norbite, "and the safe conduct assured him by my friend shall be respected."

Ordener now remembered, with shame, how he had despised old Athanese Munder's words:

"May the gift of the dying prove a blessing to the traveller."

"This man must die!" said Hacket, "for he is a spy."

"He shall not die," cried Norbite.

"How can we kill this stranger, when he has a pass from Nedlans?" said Jonas; the others re-echoed the words.

Hacket, finding he was losing ground, said furiously:

"Let him live; besides it is your affair."

"I would not kill him, if he were the devil himself,"

cried Norbite; "he must be a good fellow, or my poor friend would never have given him a pass," and addressing Ordener, he added:

"We are loyal miners. The tax has caused us to revolt. Master Hacket says we are in arms for a certain Count Schumacher, but I do not know him. Our cause is just. Now, answer me, as though you were addressing your patron saint—Will you join us?"

"Yes," said Ordener, taking the sword from Norbite, with a feeling hard to describe.

"Brother," said the young chief, "if you wish to betray us, commence by killing me."

All at once the sound of a horn was heard, and voices in the distance cried. "Here is Kennybol!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

KENNYBOL'S DOUBTS.

HACKET rushed forward, saying "My dear Kennybol, let me present the formidable Han of Iceland to you!"

Kennybol, who had arrived breathless and pale, with his hands covered in blood, repeated, "Han of Iceland here in this mine?"

"Yes," said Hacket, "he is a friend, come to help us. Are you afraid of him?" and turning to the others:

"Is our brave Kennybol mad, or has the fear of Han of Iceland delayed him?"

"Master Hacket, by St. Etheldera, I have not been delayed by fear of Han of Iceland, but by Han of Iceland himself."

"What are you talking about?" continued Hacket, whose face darkened.

"Had it not been for your cursed Han of Iceland I should have been here. Never again will I chase a white bear."

"Were you, then, nearly devoured?"

"I, Kennybol, devoured by a bear! Whom do you take me for, Master Hacket? If you but knew what I have gone through, you would hesitate even to name Han of Iceland, here."

Hacket, for a moment disconcerted, took hold of Kennybol's arm, to prevent him going within earshot of the giant.

"Pray tell us the cause of your delay? Every detail, at such a time, is of the utmost importance."

Kennybol then related how he, with six other hunters, had pursued a white bear to the famous grotto of Walderhog, and how the cries of the bear at bay had brought a little man to the rescue, a perfect monster—a demon—armed with a stone hatchet.

The sudden appearance of this devil, who could be no other but Han, the island demon, transfixed them all with terror. His six comrades fell victims to the two monsters, and he, Kennybol, owed his safety to flight, under the protection of the hunter's patron saint, Sylvestre.

"Therefore, Master Hacket, it is impossible that the devil I left with his bear, tearing my poor companions to pieces, could now be in this mine. Besides, I should at once recognise him."

"My brave friend Kennybol, all you have related I was aware of. To Han or hell, nothing is impossible. Han of Iceland, on his way here, told me of the adventure, excepting that you were the hero."

"Really?" said Kennybol, looking at Hacket with mingled feelings of respect and fear.

"When I present you to the formidable Han of

Iceland, your chief," said Hacket, "do not allude to this morning's adventure."

Kennybol followed with visible reluctance. Turning to do so, he perceived Ordener between Jonas and Norbite. He hastened to shake hands with him, saying :

"Welcome. Your boldness has succeeded, then ? "

In reply to a question from Norbite, he added :

"Do I know this stranger ? Yes, indeed. I have the greatest respect for him, for he is devoted to the cause we serve."

Hacket now came forward with the giant, saying :

"My brave hunter, Kennybol, this is your chief."

"Master Hacket," whispered Kennybol, looking at the gigantic brigand, "the Han of Iceland I left at Walderhog was a small man."

Hacket solemnly replied :

"You forget—a demon, you know."

"Ah, that is true," said the credulous hunter, making the sign of the cross.



CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MEETING IN THE FOREST.

IN the depths of the forest, early one morning, an interview took place between a short man and one who was there awaiting him to receive his report.

"Kennybol, chief of the mountaineers, only arrived at midnight. Previously we were surprised by a man appearing amongst us, whom I took for a spy. But he had a pass from a friend of the miners. They protected him. I have taken every precaution, although I fancy he is only in quest of scientific information."

"Does all go well?"

"Yes," said the short man, "the miners are under Norbite and old Jonas. The mountaineers, commanded by Kennybol, should now be on the march. Four miles from this their comrades from Hubfalls and Sund-Möer will join them, and further the blacksmiths and others, who forced the garrison of Wahlstom to retreat. This very night, my dear and honoured master, the whole of the insurgents will be encamped two miles from Skongen."

"How did they receive your Han of Iceland?"

"With perfect trust."

"Ah, what a pity the monster escaped us. If I could but avenge my poor son's death!"

"Milord, first use his name to be revenged on Schumacher. Then we can plan how to be revenged on him."

"Why let the insurgents assemble in such force so near Skongen?"

"The greater the insurrection, milord, the greater merit in quelling it, and the deeper Schumacher's crime. All must be done at one blow, and Colonel Voethaür, who is by this time quartered at Skongen with his regiment, must at once know, my noble count, that the insurgents will to-night be encamped near the Black Pillar two miles from Skongen. There is no place so well suited for an ambush, and the only insurgents who will leave that place alive will be those we intend to hand over to justice."

"Well planned, Musdæmon. All is not so satisfactory in other ways. We have made a fruitless search after those papers Dispolsen carried. And again, that cursed astrologer, Cumbysumum, just before his death, gave Schumacher's agent some papers."

"Damnation, they were my letters, detailing the whole of our plan!"

"Your plan, Musdæmon."

"Thousand pardons, noble count, but why have consulted that charlatan Cumbysumum, the old traitor?"

"Listen, Musdæmon, I am not like yourself, with neither belief nor faith in anything. And I have had good reason to place reliance in the magical science of the old man."

"You may have had confidence in his knowledge, but it is a pity your grace had such confidence in his fidelity. After all, it matters but little. Dispolsen is dead, the papers lost. If found in a few days they would be useless to those for whom they were intended."

"In any case, no suspicions could fall on me."

"Protected by your grace, no one would accuse me."

"You can of course always depend on me. I will at once send a messenger to the colonel. Come, my escort is awaiting me close by. Let us hasten to Drontheim. Serve me well, and I will stand by you through all and everything, in spite of all the Cum-bysulmums and Dispolsens on earth!"

With this they both left the forest.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE ADVANCE OF THE INSURGENTS.

THE insurgents had left the mine carrying torches, and Ordener, who was under Norbite's protection, could now see this curious army. The mountaineers were dressed in animals' skins; the miners in large felt hats and loose trousers, with bare arms and black faces, armed with any instrument that came to hand, and carrying fiery-looking banners, on which were the words: "Long live Schumacher!" "Freedom to our Deliverer!" "Liberty to the Miners!" "Freedom for Count Griffenfeld!" "Death to Guldenlew!" "Death to the Oppressors!" "Death to d'Ahlefeld!"

The rebels bore the banners more as burdens than ornaments, passing them from one to another. The advance guard was led by the giant, armed with a hatchet and club. At some distance followed Kennybol's company, watching anxiously their diabolical giant chief, lest he should assume another form.

The army was soon increased by the arrival of the blacksmiths, with their crowbars and hammers, and bands of men from various parts.

They all marched on without meeting a soul.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A COWARDLY STAB.

ALL was now ready at Countess d'Ahlefeld's for the return of her son. Monkey, ribbons, combs, the last of Scudéry's novels, most richly bound, perfume, patches, all were placed at hand on the elegant gilded toilette table. Making these preparations distracted the countess from the revengeful thoughts which ever pursued her. Besides, now that General Levin had left, the coast was clear for her to compass Schumacher and Ethel's destruction. Who could the vassal or peasant be who had gained the love of the ex-chancellor's daughter? What communications had Baron Ordener had with the prisoners at Munkholm? Why was he absent at such a time, when both kingdoms talked of nothing but his marriage with Ulrica d'Ahlefeld, whom he treated with such contempt? The countess was lost in vain conjectures. At last she decided to satisfy her curiosity, and at the same time study her interests, by going to Munkholm.

One evening, as Ethel was strolling near the dungeon, the door opened, and a tall, pale woman, dressed in white, stood before her.

Since her nurse's death, Ethel had never seen a woman at Munkholm.

"My child," said the stranger sweetly, "you are the prisoner of Munkholm's daughter?"

There was such a ring of falsehood in the very tone, that Ethel felt no sympathy with this stranger.

"I am Ethel Schumacher. My father tells me, at my birth I was called Countess of Tongsberg and Princess of Wohn."

"Your father tells you that?" cried the countess; then quickly changing her tone, she added: "You have had heavy misfortunes?"

"At my birth, sorrow received me in its arms, and, my father thinks, only at death will it leave me."

The stranger smiled, but spoke in a pitying tone:

"You do not curse the author of your misfortunes?"

"No; lest the curse should fall on my own head."

"Do you know the names of your persecutors?"

Ethel, after a moment's reflection, replied:

"All is done by God's will!"

"Does your father ever mention the king?"

"The king? Why, I pray night and morning for him, although I have never seen him."

Ethel could not understand why the stranger should bite her lips.

"Has your unfortunate father never spoken of his implacable enemies: General Arensdorf, Bishop of Spollyson and Chancellor d'Ahlefeld?"

"I never heard of them."

"And Levin de Knud?"

"Levin de Knud? That is the man for whom my father has both affection and respect, and whom he but lately warmly defended," said poor Ethel. Then, tired of these questions, she added:

"Am I a criminal, that you should thus question me?"

"If you knew my reason for coming, you would not answer me in that way."

"Have you a message? Do you come from him?" said Ethel, flushing with anxiety and impatience.

"From whom?"

The young girl was about to pronounce the name of

him who filled her soul, when she caught a strange expression in her visitor's face, and added mournfully:

"You do not know him."

"Poor girl! What can I do for you?"

Lost in thought, Ethel did not hear her.

The stranger continued:

"Does your father ever hope to leave here?"

"Yes," answered Ethel tearfully.

"He hopes so, does he? And by what means? When?"

"When he casts life aside."

"Your father is suspected of exciting the miners to revolt, and he will shortly be brought to justice, when an enquiry will be instituted."

To Ethel, the words "revolt," "enquiry," presented no idea.

"Your father has conspired against the state. His crime is all but proved. If convicted he will be condemned to death!"

"Death! Crime! My poor father to conspire! He, whose time passes in hearing me read the Edda or the Gospel! What has he done to you that you should speak of him thus?"

"Don't look at me in that way. I am not an enemy. I am simply warning you that your father is suspected of a serious crime. You ought to be grateful, and not evince dislike."

Ethel felt the reproach, and replied:

"Oh, pardon, noble lady, if I have doubted you, but we have ever been surrounded by enemies."

"What," said the stranger, smiling, "have you never yet met with a friend?"

The girl blushed and hesitated:

"Yes, noble lady; we have one friend."

"Name him. Your father's safety depends on your doing so."

"I do not know his name," said Ethel.

"You are trifling with me, though I wish to serve you. Your father's very life depends upon your telling me the name of this friend."

"Heaven knows, noble lady. I know but one name, Ordener!"

"Ordener, Ordener," repeated the stranger with much emotion:

"What is his father's name?"

"I do not know. What matters who his father or family are? This Ordener, lady, is the most noble of men."

The stranger had now learnt Ethel's secret.

"Have you heard of the approaching marriage of the viceroy's son with Grand Chancellor d'Ahlefeld's daughter?"

"Yes, I believe so," said Ethel indifferently.

"What do you think of it?"

"May it be a happy union."

"Your father's greatest enemies are the fathers of the betrothed, Count Guldenlew and Count d'Ahlefeld."

"May their children's union be a happy one."

"You might get the viceroy's son to obtain your father's pardon."

"May the saints reward you for the thought, but how can my prayers reach the viceroy's son?"

"What, do you not know him?"

"So great a man—you forget lady, I have never been beyond this fortress."

"Not know him," muttered the countess. "You must have seen the viceroy's son, for he has been here."

"Very likely; of all those who may have been here, I never saw but one, my Ordener."

"Your Ordener!" said the lady, heedless of Ethel's blushes. "Do you know an elegant-looking young man, with fair complexion and brown hair?"

"It is he, my betrothed, my adored Ordener—have

you heard of him, dear lady? Where did you last see him? He must have told you how he loved me, is it not so? He has all mine, alas! a wretched prisoner has but her love to give." Here she paused, for the lady, trembling with rage, cried in a voice of thunder:

"Wretch, you love Ordener Guldenlew, betrothed to Ulrica d'Ahlefeld, son of your father's mortal enemy, the Viceroy of Norway."

Ethel fell fainting.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FIRST SHOT.

"CAPTAIN," said Guldon Stayner to Kennybol, "the wind is playing strange pranks with us this evening; fancy setting fire to the wood. What an idea for an army, to get warmth from a forest!"

"God preserve us from such a thing! Only think of the game—cook it if you like, but don't burn it alive."

Old Guldon laughed. "Ah, captain, you are the same Keunybol, a wolf to the roe-buck, bear to the wolf, and buffalo to the bear."

"Friend Guldon, you come from Drontheim. Did you ever see this—what is his name—Stunacher Gleffenhem—I really forget—I mean the man in whose name we have risen against royal authority—in fact the one whose arms are embroidered on that large banner you are carrying?"

"You mean the Munkholm prisoner, the count. Why I should have wanted the eyes of that devil before us; there is but one of us who has seen the count."

"You mean Hacket. But he left us this very night to return to him—"

"I mean the young man, in the green cloak and black plume, who joined us this night—he knows the count as well as I know you, Captain Kennybol."

"I thought so," said the latter, delighted with his own penetration.

"He not only knows the count," added Guldon, "but he has been to Munkholm, and he went into the prison with as little ceremony as we should into the Park."

"How do you know this?"

"Look," said he, uncovering a splendid buckle attached to his belt.

"Guldon Stayner, your father died at the age of a hundred and two, without anything to reproach himself for; you are now fifty-seven, not young even for an owl. Now I would rather those diamonds were but grains of sand, if they have come to you in a dishonourable way."

Guldon coolly replied:

"I hold those diamonds as my lawful property, and they are real diamonds. One night, about a week ago, when I was doing duty for a sick fisherman, I had directed some people to Drontheim, where they wished to carry the body of an officer they had found at Urchtal, when a young man jumped into my boat saying 'To Munkholm.' He said this with such an air of authority that I took up my oars. He had left his servant with two horses on land. On arriving he spoke to the officer in charge—to me, by way of payment, he threw this diamond buckle. Had it not been a mysterious matter, he would hardly have paid me in such a way; so I felt sure he was going to see the famous prisoner, and I am still more so, that this young man, now with Norbite, is the same. I should know his face out of a thousand—the one who made my fortune. Besides, the same cloak, the same plume. And I

believe the count we are trying to set at liberty has more faith in him than in Master Hacket, who seems to me to be good for nothing but shouting like a wild cat."

"Comrade, I am of your opinion, and I would far rather obey this young man than the envoy Hacket, and if the island devil does command us, we owe it far less to this chattering crow of a Hacket than to this stranger."

"True, captain."

"Kennybol," said Norbite, "we are betrayed; the whole regiment of musketeers is marching against us; the hussars and three troops of dragoons are advancing. One who has come from the south says so, and tells, us that the green jackets are as thick on the way as the hedges. Now—quickly for Skongen—there at least we can defend ourselves."

"But Master Hacket?" said Kennybol. "Where is this Hacket? He is either a traitor or a coward."

It was easy to see by Jonas' face that he also had heard the fatal news.

"Now, comrade, Jonas and I believe it would be better to halt here."

"And I, brother Kennybol, think it would be wiser to retreat."

"Halt! Retreat!" cried Norbite. "Advance, I say!"

"Advance!" repeated Kennybol. "What about the soldiers?"

"I have no fancy to return to our mountains as foxes before wolves. Besides, all our names are known, and I prefer the ball from a musket to the rope of a gibbet."

"Well, you are right, Norbite," said Kennybol and Jonas, "there is danger on all sides. It is better to march over the precipice than to retreat."

"Onward!" cried Jonas, grasping the hilt of his sword.

"We must march at once to Skongen, the garrison must soon surrender, and out of these defiles we must extricate ourselves; but all must be done in silence. Now to our posts, and to-morrow we shall perhaps be at Drontheim in spite of all the soldiers."

The word of command was given, and all silently advanced; but the route became narrower, and after two hours' painful marching, the advanced guard reached the fir-trees at the end of the defile called the Black Pillar.

"Thanks to St. Silvestre," said Guldon Stayper, coming up to Kennybol, "we have cleared that cut-throat place, and the Black Pillar has not proved fatal."

Looking at two round objects which gleamed through the hedge.

"There," cried Kennybol, "are two fiery eyes for you. They belong, I feel sure, to the largest wild cat in the thicket."

"You may be right," said old Stayper; "but if the Demon of Iceland were not marching before us, I should say they were his eyes."

"Silence," said Kennybol, raising his musket, and fired.

No wild cat's cry answered. It was more like a tiger's roar, followed by a burst of laughter more fearful still.

Scarcely had the flash lit up the darkness, than the sound of thousands of voices rose from all sides, shouting: "Long live the king!" and a volley of musketry followed, mowing down the rebels from every point. The terrible firing from the heavy guns lighted up the scene—a battalion at every rock, a soldier behind every tree:

While the miners were still on the march, Colonel

Vøethaun had arrived at Skongen with his regiment, and he was about entering the house placed at his disposal, when he felt a heavy hand pressed on his shoulder. Turning round, he faced a little man in a large straw hat, drawn over his face, and wrapped in a large cloak. Nothing could be seen of him but a thick red beard, and hands hidden in huge gloves.

"What the devil do you want?" cried the colonel.

"Follow me, colonel. I have news of the utmost importance to you."

By one in the colonel's position, no news was to be despised at such a time.

"Go on," said he, following the little man till they reached the outskirts.

"Colonel, would you care to crush the insurgents at a single blow?"

Laughing, the colonel replied:

"It would not be a bad way of commencing the campaign."

"Place all your men in ambush at the end of the defile called the Black Pillar. The whole of the insurgents will be encamped there to-night. At the first report charge them, and the victory will be easy."

"I thank you for your advice; but how did you gain the information?"

"If you really knew me you would not ask the question; but I have not come to tell you who I am."

"Perhaps you are one of the rebels. But fear nothing, this very service will be your safeguard."

"I refused to join them."

"As you are the king's faithful subject, why refuse your name?"

"That has nothing to do with it."

"Can you tell me if the brigands are commanded by Han of Iceland?"

"Han of Iceland?" repeated the little man in a curious tone.

The colonel still continued to examine him.

"Colonel," at length said the stranger, "I have told you all I intend to say. Now, place your regiment in ambush, and the insurgents are yours."

"You are depriving yourself of the king's gratitude by concealing your name; but Baron Vœthaun will show you his sense of the favour thus rendered," and the colonel threw his purse at the little man's feet.

"Keep your gold, colonel, I don't want it. Had you now, wanted a heavy fee for killing men, I would have given gold for their blood," said he, in his turn, showing a heavy purse attached to his belt.

Before the colonel could recover from his astonishment at these strange words, the man had disappeared.

The baron slowly returned, wondering what faith could be placed on the advice from such a man.

Just then a letter came from the grand chancellor, giving the same advice that had been proffered by the strange object in the large straw hat and huge gloves.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HAN THE TRUE AND HAN THE FALSE.

IT is impossible to describe the confusion of the rebels, thus suddenly surprised; Kennybol's fatal shot was the only one they had fired, and a volley poured in upon them from all sides. To withstand the shock was impossible; in fact, owing to the narrow and winding path the ranks were broken, and the long column of insurgents looked like the serpent, who, when struck on the spine, writhes its severed coils and then tries to unite them. After the first panic, this

crowd of men gave such a cry, that for a moment it drowned the shouts of their triumphant enemies, and even they were aghast when they saw these brigands, almost unarmed, scale the rocks, clinging with their teeth and hands to the brambles overhanging the precipices, brandishing their hammers and their iron forks. Some even reached the summit of the rocks by making a bridge of the dead, or by raising themselves on their comrades' shoulders, but scarcely had they shown their blackened faces convulsed with rage, or even raised a hatchet to the cry of "Liberty!" than they were hurled into the abyss, often dragging to destruction companions who were clinging to a bush or the point of a rock. Vainly they tried to defend themselves, or to seek safety in flight. The mountaineers, under the brave but imprudent Kennybol, had suffered the most. They formed the advance guard, and the moment after that fatal shot from their chief they were met with a volley on all sides. Kennybol, in this horrible crisis, turned towards the mysterious giant, hoping to receive supernatural help, but the demon neither spread his wings, nor sent forth flames and thunderbolts on the musketeers, neither did he suddenly reach out and cast a mountain on his assailants, nor strike the earth for it to open beneath the battalion in ambush. This formidable Han of Iceland gave way at the first shock, and asked for a carbine, saying, in an ordinary voice, that his hatchet was as useless at such a time as an old woman's distaff. Kennybol, astonished, but still credulous, gave him a musket, in such fear that he almost forgot even to dread the shots that fell around. He still expected to find the musket, in the hand of Han of Iceland, become a cannon or a winged dragon, shooting forth fire from its eyes and its nose. Imagine Kennybol's surprise when he

saw the demon charge and fire his gun several times, with less skill than he could himself have done. It was no use thinking of miracles, he must try ordinary means of help for his companions. His poor old comrade Stayper lay dead at his feet, and the terrified mountaineers pressed one against another, little thinking that by thus forming a mass they were a surer target for their enemies. Kennybol at once ordered his unfortunate companions to disperse, to throw themselves into the nearest thickets, to hide themselves in the brushwood, and return their enemies' fire.

The mountaineers were all pretty well armed, for they were mostly hunters, and they at once obeyed their chief, for in moments of danger men often lose their heads, but they willingly obey one who shows presence of mind, yet some even then remained inactive, either leaning on their muskets or lying by the side of the wounded, to meet death, without firing even a shot in self-defence. It may seem strange that these men should so soon lose courage, accustomed as they were to hunt wild beasts, but one thing is certain, that courage in some minds springs from habit, and the men who will *bolally* face shot, will tremble at darkness or the verge of a precipice, whilst others who will attack a wild beast, or take an abyss at a bound, will fly before a salvo of artillery. Kennybol was surrounded by heaps of his expiring comrades, although himself but slightly wounded in the left arm, whilst the diabolical giant simply acted as a musketeer.

All at once cries of distress and terror, mingled with curses, arose from the victorious troops, certainly not caused by the slight amount of damage done by the mountaineers. Firing ceased, and the smoke blew aside enough to show the soldiers flying in all directions to avoid the immense stones which fell in their midst from the overhanging rocks.

At such unexpected help, Kennybol turned round, expecting to find the giant, Han of Iceland, had taken flight over the rocks, and was hurling these huge masses on the enemy—but no, the giant was still near him.

Finding their enemies had nearly all ceased to fire, and numbers of them lay crushed beneath the masses of rock, which still continued to fall, Kennybol and his followers rallied at this unexpected succour, crying, "Liberty! Liberty! No more taxes!" when the soldiers, largely reinforced, advanced within gun-shot, the commander displaying a flag of truce.

Kennybol, at the sound of the enemy's bugle, had ordered his men to charge their carbines, and place themselves in a double line, two abreast, he remaining at their head with the giant, with whom he was more familiar, finding, now that he dared to look at him, that his eyes were not flaming like a furnace, and that his pretended claws were much like human hands.

The officer with the flag of truce had advanced half way, and the trumpeter who accompanied him had thrice sounded the bugle. The mountaineers could distinctly hear the officer's words:

"In the name of the King. The King's pardon is granted to all rebels who will throw down their arms and deliver their chiefs up to royal justice."

Scarcely had the commander uttered the words than a shot was fired from the neighbouring thicket, which struck him, and he fell, crying, "Treachery!"

No one knew from whom the fatal shot had come.

"Treachery! cowardice!" cried the musketeers, trembling with rage, and at once discharged a murderous volley at the mountaineers.

"Treachery!" cried the mountaineers, furious at seeing their comrades fall beneath such an unexpected attack.

"At them, comrades, death to the cowards! Death," cried the officers of the musketeers.

"Death, death!" replied the mountaineers.

Both parties advanced near the body of the fallen officer; then came a most fatal hand-to-hand fight; pickaxe against bayonet, sword against hatchet; many, so close was the strife, could use no other arms than their teeth and their daggers.

Both mountaineers and musketeers were animated by the same fierce indignation, crying at the same time, "Treachery! Vengeance!"

The fight had reached that point, when the death of an enemy, although unknown, is preferable to your own life, and men trampled over the dead and the wounded, at times rousing even the dying to grasp with his teeth the foot that crushed him.

Suddenly a little man appeared amongst the combatants, covered with wild animals' skins, looking like a wild beast himself. He threw himself into the midst of the slaughter, shouting with joy and laughter. His stone hatchet fell with equal force on a rebel or a soldier; if he made any difference, it was in more freely slaying the Munkholm musketeers than the others.

All gave way before his terrific hatchet, which he brandished from side to side, casting around him fragments of flesh, severed limbs and broken bones. He, too, cried '*Vengeance!*' and added strange words, more often the name of "*Gill.*" To him the slaughter appeared to be a holiday.

A mountaineer falling at the feet of the giant on whom Kennybol had placed such hopes, cried out:

"Han of Iceland, save me!"

"Han of Iceland!" repeated the little man, coming towards the giant. "Are you Han of Iceland?"

The giant for answer raised his iron hatchet. The little man stepped back, and the axe in its descent

cleft the skull of the unfortunate man, who had implored the giant's help.

"Oh, oh!" said the unknown. "By Ingulphus! I thought Han of Iceland more expert."

"Thus Han of Iceland saves those who implore help," said the giant.

"You are right."

These formidable champions attacked each other with fury. Both stone and iron hatchet broke in a thousand pieces. The little man, grasping a wooden club at hand, aimed a heavy blow at the giant's head, just as he was stooping to seize him. The giant fell with a fearful cry.

"You bore a name much too heavy for you," said the little man triumphantly, and, brandishing his victorious club, he went in search of other victims.

The giant was only stunned, but not dead. Just as he opened his eyes, a musketeer perceived him, and throwing himself on him cried: "*Han of Iceland is taken prisoner! Victory!*"

"*Han of Iceland taken!*" was echoed on all sides, both in accents of triumph and distress. The little man had disappeared.

The mountaineers, utterly outnumbered, were giving way, their principal chiefs having surrendered to stay the slaughter. They were now entirely disheartened at the capture of Han of Iceland, and lowered their arms.

At dawn in the defiles of the Black Pillar a deathly silence reigned, at times broken by faint moaning. A mass of crows overhead formed a black cloud over the fatal ravine, and some poor goatherds, who passed through it at dawn, ran home terrified, saying, in the defile of the Black Pillar they had seen a *beast* with a human face, seated on a heap of slain, *drinking* blood.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LIPS SPEAK—THE HEART BREAKS.

“MY daughter, open the window—it is so dark.”
“Father, it will soon be night time.”

“I can yet see the sun behind the hills, and I long to breathe the air through the iron bars of my cell. The sky is so clear.”

“Father, a tempest is rising.”

“A storm, Ethel. Where do you see it?”

“The sky is so clear, that I can fear the storm.”

“If I had had such thoughts in my youth, we should not have been here,” said the old man, looking with surprise at his daughter. “What you say is right, but it is beyond your years, and I cannot understand how, by instinct, you know what I alone have gained from experience.”

Ethel, at this solemn, but simple answer, lowered her eyes and sighed.

“My child, for some days you have been so pale as though you had no life in you, and in the morning I can see that your eyes are red with weeping, and for days you have remained silent, leaving me to brood over the past. You are sadder than I, yet you have not the burden of a wasted life—a blank. Your youth has been passed near affliction, but your heart cannot have felt its sting. Besides, morning clouds are so quickly dispersed, and youth builds castles in the air, regardless of the past. Child, what is the matter? This captivity is terrible, but you are sheltered from the blows of misfortune. What

have you done? You are not fretting on my account. Surely, you are accustomed to my sad fate? If I have lost all hope, that is no reason I should see you despair," added the prisoner tenderly.

Ethel had remained silent; she now fell on her knees, hiding her face in her hands and sobbing bitterly. What had she done to this strange woman that she should destroy her life by telling the poor girl the secret of Ordener's full name? She could get no rest; her nights were passed in tears. He was not hers; he, in whom all her thoughts and feelings were centred; he for whom she prayed; he, whose wife she hoped to be. The very evening that Ordener had pressed her in his arms was now but a dream; yet every night this sweet dream returned. It was then a guilty feeling still to think tenderly of the absent one. Her Ordener betrothed to another! Then she felt all the tortures of jealousy as she lay at night tossing to and fro, picturing her Ordener, perhaps, at that very moment in the arms of another woman, rich, noble, and more beautiful than herself. "And I," said she to herself, "was foolish enough to think he had risked his life for me—Ordener, the viceroy's son, a great lord; I, nothing but a poor prisoner, the despised daughter of an outlaw. He has gone, he is at liberty; gone doubtless to wed his beautiful betrothed, daughter of a chancellor, a minister, a proud count. So he deceived me, my Ordener! Oh, God! who would think that voice could deceive!" And the wretched girl wept unceasingly. Ordener was still her god, even though going to the altar with that smile for another, which had given her but lately such happiness.

She had done her best to hide her grief from her father; tears that are shed are far less bitter than those that are smothered, and it was days before the

old man noticed the change in Ethel, and when he questioned her so tenderly, she gave way utterly.

"Ethel," said he at last, "why are you crying—you have no care in this world?"

The noble girl roused herself, and, brushing away her tears, she answered:

"Father, forgive me one of my weak moments." With a smile she fetched the Edda and commenced reading.

"Cease, my child," said the old man.

She closed the book.

"Ethel," said Schumacher, "do you ever think of Ordener—he who has gone?"

"Father," said the young girl, troubled; "why concern ourselves about him? I think, with you, he is gone never to return."

"Not return, my child? I could never have said that. On the contrary, I have a presentiment he will."

"You did not think so when you were speaking of him before, so doubtingly."

"Did I speak doubtingly?"

"Yes, father, and I am of your way of thinking. I fancy he has deceived us."

"Deceived us, my child? If I so judged him, I have acted without cause. I have received proofs from Ordener of entire devotion."

"How do you know, my dear father, if his words but concealed his treacherous thoughts?"

"Men as a rule do not seek those in misfortune and disgrace. And if Ordener were not attached to me, he would not have come to my prison without an object."

"Are you sure in coming here he had no object?"

"What are you thinking of?"

Ethel was silent. She could not accuse the dearly loved Ordener, that she before had so warmly defended.

"I am no longer Count Griffenfeld, the High Chan-

cellor of Denmark and Norway—the all powerful minister—dispenser of royal favours. I am a wretched state prisoner, an outlaw, a proscribed politician. Why, it requires courage to speak of me without a curse. The very men that I have loaded with honours and favours dare not cross the threshold of my cell, which with but one exception is trodden only by the feet of jailors or executioners; and it is heroism, my daughter, for the man calling himself my friend to do so. This young man deserves my gratitude, if only for showing me his sympathising face, and letting me hear a voice which breathed consolation.”

Ethel listened patiently to words which, a few days before, would have filled her with ecstasy, when Ordener was still her Ordener.

“Listen, my daughter,” continued the old man, in a solemn voice, “to what I am about to say. I am gradually fading, both strength, life are fading from me; yes, my end is approaching.”

“Father,” cried Ethel despairingly, “don’t speak like that! Spare your daughter’s feelings. Will you leave me also? What will become of me, alone in the world, without a protector?”

“The protection of an outlaw,” said her father, shaking his head. “Yes, I am thinking far more of your future than my past misfortunes. Listen, and do not interrupt me. You ought not to judge Ordener so severely. Until now, I had no idea you held him in such aversion. He was both frank and noble-looking, however. That is no criterion, but I must say I believe he possessed some good qualities; being a man, he might be steeped in every vice and crime. There is never smoke without fire,” and, fixing his eyes upon his daughter, the old man continued: “Feeling myself near death, I have thought much about him and of you, Ethel. Should he return, as I am in hopes

he will, I will make him both your protector and your husband."

Ethel trembled and turned pale—for it was at the very time her dream of happiness had vanished, that her father had sought to realise it—and the bitter thought recurred to her, *I might have been happy!* For a moment she could not utter a word, fearing the burning tears would fall.

"You had selected him for me as a husband, milord and father, without knowing who he was, to whom he belonged, not even his name?"

"I did not say I *had* selected him, but I repeat I select him for you. What do I care about his birth? I do not want to know his family, since I know him well. Only think of it, it is your last hope. Fortunately he has not the same dislike to you that you evince towards him."

The poor girl lifted up her eyes to heaven.

"You hear me, Ethel? He may be of humble birth, for people born in palaces hardly frequent prisons. And don't shew any false pride, for Ethel Schumacher is no longer Princess of Wohn and Countess of Tongsberg. You are in a lower position than that from which your father raised himself. Be thankful, if this man accepts your hand, whatever his family may be; if of humble birth, so much the better, you will then at least be protected from the troubles with which your father's path was beset. You will be beyond the reach of either hatred or envy by changing your name; your life, very different to mine, will end better than it has commenced."

Ethel had fallen at the prisoner's feet.

"Oh, father! have pity on me, and do not picture happiness which I can never enjoy."

"Ethel, you are playing with Fate. I refused the hand of a royal princess—are you listening?—the Prin-

cess of Holstein-Augustenburg. My pride has been cruelly punished. You disdain a man of humble birth, straightforward though he may be. Tremble, lest your pride should meet the same punishment."

"Would to Heaven he were a man of humble birth, but straightforward!"

"My daughter, do not let my last moments be torn with anxiety about your future. Promise me to accept this stranger for your husband?"

"I will always obey you, father, but do not hope for his return."

"I have well weighed all, and I believe, by the way this Ordener uttered your name ——"

"That he loves me," interrupted Ethel bitterly. "Oh, no; do not credit it."

"To use your own words, I am not aware that he loves you, but I know he will return."

"Banish the idea, father. Besides, if you but knew him, perhaps you would not care for him as a son-in-law."

"Ethel, he shall be so, whatever his name and rank may be."

"Well, then, this young man in whom you have found such consolation, who is to be your daughter's protector—if he were called the Viceroy of Norway's son, Count Guldenlew, one of your mortal enemies?"

"What are you saying? Great Heavens! Ordener, this Ordener—it is impossible!"

The fearful expression of hatred in the eyes of the old man struck Ethel with a cold shiver; and she would gladly have retracted her words. The blow had struck home. Schumacher stood with a fixed look in his face, and trembling in every limb. At length he murmured in a faint voice, like a man in a dream:

"Ordener! Yes, Ordener Guldenlew! Go on, Schumacher, you old fool, throw open your arms to

him. This loyal young man has come to stab you So," continued he, but in a voice like thunder, "they have sent me some one belonging to their infamous race to insult me in my downfall and captivity. I have seen a d'Ahlefeld, and nearly smiled on a Guldenlew. The monsters! Who would have thought that of this Ordener, that he had such a soul and such a name? Misery for me, misery to him!" Quite overcome, he fell in his chair, sighing heavily.

Poor Ethel, terrified, was sobbing at his feet.

"Don't cry, my child," said he. "Let me press you to my heart." But at such a moment, enraged as her father appeared, Ethel could hardly understand the caress. "You are more clear-sighted than your old father. You were not deceived by the soft-eyed but venomous serpent. Come, let me thank you for the hatred you have shewn this execrable Ordener."

Ethel shuddered at praise so little deserved.

"Father, be calm," said she.

"Promise me," said Schumacher, "ever to retain the same sentiments towards Guldenlew's son. Swear it!"

"God forbids the oath, father."

"Swear it, my child," continued Schumacher. "Is it not true that you will ever have the same feeling for this Ordener Guldenlew?"

She was not troubled to find an answer:

"Always."

"I cannot leave you the riches and honours of which they have deprived me, but I can bequeath my hatred for them to you. Listen. They deprived your old father of his rank and glory, they dragged him in chains to the scaffold, loading me with every infamy and torturing me with every pain. The wretches owed their power to me, and only used it to injure me. May heaven and hell hear me! Curse them all, and curse their offspring!" He stopped to embrace the

poor girl, who was terrified by his imprecations. "Now tell me, my Ethel, my only hope and pride, how did you discover that this traitor bore the hated name, more bitter to me than gall? How did you find out the secret?"

She was about answering, when the door opened, and a man in black entered, carrying a black stick, and wearing a burnished steel chain round his neck. He was surrounded by halberdiers.

"What do you want with me?" said the captive, astonished.

The man, without replying, unrolled a long parchment, from which hung a large green seal attached by some silk; he read in a loud voice:

"In the name of His Majesty our Merciful Lord and Sovereign, Christiern, King! Schumacher, state prisoner in this royal fortress of Munkholm, and his daughter, are to follow the bearer of this same order."

Schumacher repeated his question:

"What do you want with me?"

The man in black impassibly prepared himself to read the order over again.

"That will do," said the old man.

Rising, he signed to Ethel, who was surprised and terrified, to follow with him this dismal escort.



CHAPTER XXXV.

THE HANGMAN'S SUMMONS.

THE night wind howled round the cursed Tower, and the doors of the very ruin of Vyglā trembled on their hinges as Orugix arrived in the midst of his family.

The Tower was inhabited by the executioner, his wife and children. They were all seated round a fire on the first floor. The flames threw a glare on their sombre faces and their crimson clothes. There was a look in the children's faces as horrible as their father's laugh, combined with the mother's haggard expression. Their eyes and those of Bechlie were turned on the father, as he entered covered with dust, showing that he had travelled far.

"Wife and children, listen. After two days' absence I have not brought bad news. Before another month has passed if I be not the royal executioner, may I never again tie a slip-knot or wield an axe. Rejoice, my little cubs, your father will, perhaps, leave you the scaffold at Copenhagen."

"Nychol," said Bechlie "what has happened?"

"And you, my old Bohemian," replied Nychol, with his deep laugh, "rejoice, too. You can buy a blue glass necklet to ornament your throat, something like a strangled swan's. Our engagement is soon at an end; but when you see me the executioner of both kingdoms, you will not refuse to drain a glass with me."

"What has happened, father?" said the children,

the elder playing with a clothes-horse covered in blood, the younger amusing himself with plucking a living bird that he had taken from its mother's nest.

"Kill that bird, Haspar—it squeaks like an old saw. Besides, you must not be cruel. Now, in about eight days, Bechlie, ex-chancellor Schumacher, prisoner at Munkholm, who was in close quarters with me at Copenhagen, and the famous brigand of Iceland, Han of Klipstadur, will pass through my hands, perhaps on the same day."

The woman looked astonished, but, full of curiosity, enquired:

"Schumacher! Han of Iceland! But how is that?"

"On my way to Skongen this morning, I met the musketeers of Munkholm, who were victoriously returning to Drontheim. One of the soldiers deigned to answer me, because he doubtless did not know me—my red jacket and red cart were strange to him. He informed me the insurgents, hemmed in near Black Pillar, had been cut to pieces. You must know, Bechlie, the miners had rebelled for the sake of Schumacher, and were commanded by Han of Iceland. This means a charge of high treason against Schumacher, and against Han of Iceland, for exciting an insurrection against royal authority. In both cases these noble lords will either be led to the block or the gibbet. For each of these great executions I cannot have less than fifteen golden ducats, besides the name I shall get; then there are others."

"But," said Bechlie, "Han of Iceland has been taken?"

"Don't interrupt your lord and master, daughter of perdition. Yes, this famous Han of Iceland has been taken prisoner, with some other chiefs, his lieutenants. They will bring me in twelve crowns ahead, besides the sale of the bodies."

"Did you see Han, father?" asked the children.

"Be quiet. You cry out like a rascal who swears he is innocent. Yes, I saw him in the midst of the soldiers. He is a giant, and he was walking with his arms crossed behind him, bound in chains; his forehead was bandaged, being wounded in the head, but before long I shall have cured him of that wound," and making a horrible sign, the executioner continued: "He was followed by four other wounded prisoners. They are all to be tried at Drontheim with the ex-High Chancellor Schumacher. There will be a special meeting of the court, over which the present High Chancellor will preside."

"Father, what were the other prisoners like?"

"The two first were old men—one a miner, and the other a mountaineer. Both seemed in despair. One of the others was a young miner, who walked firmly whistling; the other was one of those travellers who came here about ten days ago, the night of that dreadful storm. Do you remember, Bechlie?"

"As Satan remembers the day of his fall," said the woman.

"Did you notice a young man who was with that bewigged old fool of a doctor? The young fellow had a large green cloak and in his hat was a long black plume?"

"I can see him before me, when he said, '*Woman, we have gold!*'"

"Well, the fourth prisoner was the same young man. I certainly did not see his face, for it was entirely hidden by his feather—his hat, his hair and cloak; besides his head, was lowered. But the same clothes, the same boots, the very manner—I will swallow the stone gibbet of Skongen at a mouthful if that is not the same man. What do you say to that, Bechlie? Would it not be droll after helping this stranger to sustain life, I should also help him to shorten it, that

he should be the means of showing my ability, after having enjoyed my hospitality?" said the executioner, laughing loudly; adding: "Come, let us be merry. Give me some of that beer, which rasps the throat, as though it were made of files. Let us drink to my future advancement. Honours and health to Lord Nychol Orugix, royal executioner in perspective. I will own, old sinner, that I had much trouble in getting to Næs, quietly, to hang some ignoble stealer of cabbages and endive, but thirty-two picces were not to be despised, and after all, I should not lower myself by executing merely thieves and scamps of that kind, after I have beheaded the noble count ex-High Chancellor and the famous demon of Iceland, so I decided on dispatching the poor wretch at Næs. Awaiting my diploma as master, royal, of lofty works. Here," said he, drawing his leather purse from his knapsack, "are the thirty-two pieces."

Just then a horn gave three blasts outside the tower.

"Wife!" cried Orugix, rising, "those are the chief magistrate's archers," and he hastened to go down. He soon returned with a document, of which he had broken the seal.

"There, just read what has come from the chief magistrate, you who could decipher Satan's conjuring book. Perhaps it is my promotion, as the court will be presided over by a high chancellor. To condemn a high chancellor and to follow out the decree ought to be done by a royal executioner."

After looking well over the parchment, the woman read it aloud, while the children looked at her in astonishment, mixed with stupidity:

"In the name of the chief magistrate of the Drontheimhuus, Nichol Orugix, executioner to the province, is at once to leave for Drontheim, taking with him his axe of honour, and his block, with its black hangings."

"Is that all?" said the executioner discontentedly.

"That is all," replied Bechlie.

"*Executioner of the province!*" muttered he between his teeth, looking angrily at the court parchment. "Well," continued he, "I must obey, and go. Yet I am told to take the axe of honour and the black hangings. See, Bechlie, there is no rust on my axe, and that the drapery is not marked. I must not be discouraged. Perhaps I shall have promotion as the wages of this fine execution. Those condemned will not have the satisfaction of being put to death by a royal executioner. So much the worse for them."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"WHERE IS MY SON?"

COUNT D'AHLEFELD in his satin gown trimmed with ermine, and a judge's huge wig, which hid both head and shoulders, wearing several stars and decorations, amongst them being the collar of the royal orders of the Elephant and of Dannebrog, in fact in full robes as High Chancellor of Denmark and Norway, was walking alone in the Countess d'Ahlefeld's room, looking anxious.

"It is nine o'clock; the court will soon be sitting, and I must not keep them waiting, for the sentence must be passed to-night, that the execution may take place in the morning. The chief magistrate assured me the executioner would be here before dawn. Elphège, have you ordered the barge which is to take me to Murkholm?"

"Milord," replied the countess, rising, "it has been here at least half-an-hour. Everything is ready."

"You say, Elphège, there's a love affair going on between Ordener Guldenlew and Schumacher's daughter?"

"Deep love, I swear to you," replied the countess, with rage and contempt.

"Who would have imagined it? Yet I can assure you I had my doubts."

"And I," said the countess. "It is a trick that cursed Levin has played us."

"Old rascal of a Mecklenbourgeois," muttered the chancellor, "I will tell Arensdorf. If I could but compass his disgrace. Yet, listen, Elphège, I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"There are six to be judged at the Munkholm Castle. Schumacher by to-morrow, I hope, will be no longer to be feared. The huge mountaineer, our false Han of Iceland, has sworn to keep up the character, in hopes Musdœmon, who has given him large sums of money, will effect his escape. That Musdœmon's ideas are really diabolical. There are four other prisoners, three of the rebel chiefs, and one person who came, no one knows how, in the midst of the assemblage at Apsyl-Corh, and who has fallen into our hands through Musdœmon's precautions. Musdœmon thinks he is Levin's spy. Immediately on his arrival he asked for the general, and when he heard Levin was away he was dismayed. This young man will not answer any of Musdœmon's questions."

"My lord," interrupted the countess, "why did you not question him yourself?"

"Really, Elphège, with all I have had to do since I came, how could I have done so? I left it to Musdœmon. He is as much interested in the matter as I am. Besides, I do not believe this man is of any importance. Only some poor vagabond—in fact, of no other use but

to present as Levin de Knud's spy. And as he was taken prisoner amongst the rebels, it may prove connivance between the Mecklenbourgeois and Schumacher. And if we cannot bring in an indictment against this cursed Levin, at all events he will be disgraced."

"You are right, my lord. But this supposed passion of the Baron of Thorwick for Ethel Schumacher?"

"Neither you nor I are novices in the world's ways," replied the chancellor, shrugging his shoulders, "yet we do not understand mankind. When Schumacher has for the second time been convicted of high treason; when on the scaffold he has paid the penalty of these infamous convictions; when his daughter has sunk to the lowest ranks and is branded with her father's crimes, do you think, Elphège, that Ordener will remember this childish fancy that you call passion, created by the excited language of a foolish young prisoner, that he will hesitate a moment between the dishonoured daughter of a wretched criminal and the illustrious daughter of a mighty chancellor? We must judge men by ourselves, my dear. Where have you seen a man who would act otherwise?"

"I hope that you are right."

"I asked the magistrate to have Schumacher's daughter present at her father's trial, and she is to be placed near me. I am rather curious about this creature, and wish to study her. You will not think this altogether useless."

"All is precious that can throw any light on this affair," said the countess. "But does any one know where Ordener is now?"

"No one can tell. He is a worthy pupil of Levin's. A wandering knight like himself. I think he is now on a visit to Ward Hus. Never mind, our Ulrica will decide him. I forgot the court was waiting for me."

"Just one word, my lord," said the countess, stopping

the high chancellor. "Where is my Frederic? I asked you yesterday, but you were so deep in thought that I could get no reply."

"Frederic?" said the count, putting his hand to his face.

"Yes, my Frederic; answer me. His regiment has returned to Drontheim without him. Tell me that Frederic was not in that horrible defile of Black Pillar. Why did your face change at Frederic's name? I am torn with anxiety."

"Elphège, calm yourself. I vow he was not at Black Pillar. Besides, the lists of killed and wounded have been published."

"You reassure me," said the countess calmly. "Two officers only were killed, Captain Lory and Baron Radmer, who, with my son, played so many tricks at the Copenhagen ball. Oh! I have read and re-read the lists, I assure you; but tell me, my lord, did my son remain at Wahlstrom?"

"He remained there," said the count.

"Well, then, dear friend," said the mother, trying to smile tenderly, "I have one favour to ask you—let my Frederic return from that dreadful country."

"Madam," said the chancellor, disengaging his arms, "the court is waiting for me. Adieu. What you ask does not depend on me," and abruptly he left her.

The countess remained gloomy and thoughtful. "Does not depend on him," said she; "he had but to say the word, to give me back, my son. That man is really bad. I always thought so."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE.

AFTER the guards had taken her father away from the dungeon of the Lion of Sleswig, Ethel tremblingly followed her guide through dark passages, to her quite unknown, until they came to a gloomy cell, which she entered, and the door closed upon her. Facing the door was a large iron grating, lighted on the other side by torches, the light showing her a woman veiled and dressed in black, who, seated at the grating, made Ethel a sign to sit near her. Thunder-struck, Ethel silently obeyed. Through the opening she could see a most imposing sight.

A hall draped in black and faintly lighted by brass lamps suspended from the top. At the extreme end was a table shaped like a horse-shoe, and seven judges sat behind it, the one in the centre occupying a raised seat, and wearing diamond collars and gold stars glittering amidst the gloom. The judge to the right of this one was the chief magistrate of the province, wearing his white scarf and ermine cloak. On a platform, over which hung a canopy, to the right of the judge, sat an old man in priestly vestments.. On the left a table covered with papers, at which sat a little man in an enormous wig, and covered in the folds of a long black cloak. Facing the judges was a wooden bench, surrounded by halberdiers carrying torches, which reflected the faces of a crowd of spectators pressing against the grating which separated them from the court.

Ethel appeared to be in a dream, but far from indifferent at what was passing. Something seemed to tell her to give all her attention, as this was a crisis in her life. She was agitated by two feelings, either to know at once the reason for the interest she felt, or not to know it at all. Since Ordener was lost to her for ever, she was anxious to know her fate, caring now but little for life. This feeling, that something of moment was about to happen, made her look on the gloomy scene with less repugnance, feeling impatient both with gladness and fear.

The president rose, and proclaiming in the king's name: "*The court of justice is open!*"

The little man in black, to the left of the court, read in a low and rapid manner what appeared to Ethel a long discourse, in which she could hear her father's name, mingled with the words, *conspiracy, revolt of the miners* and high treason.

She remembered now the words of the unknown woman, when she spoke of the accusation which threatened her father. Ethel shuddered on hearing the man in black finish his discourse, and loudly pronouncing the word—*death!*

Ethel had an instinctive feeling of fear for the veiled woman, terrified her; she timidly asked her:

"Where are we? What does all this mean?"

This mysterious companion only signed to her to be silent and to listen.

The venerable old man in priestly vestments rose, and Ethel heard the following words distinctly pronounced:

"In the name of Almighty and Merciful God, I, Pamphile Eluthère, Bishop of the royal town of Drontheim and province of the Drontheimhuus, I bow to this honoured Court of justice, assembled in the name of God and our sovereign Lord the King.

"And I say that the prisoners now before the court are both men and Christians, and finding they have no counsel, it is my intention, honoured judges, to give them all the assistance I can, in the cruel position in which God has thought fit to place them, praying the Almighty to give strength in our weakness, and light to our blindness. Thus it is that I, bishop of this royal diocese, I bow to this honoured and judicial court."

Having thus spoken, the bishop left his pontifical throne, and seated himself on the prisoners' bench; whilst the people applauded him.

The president, rising, cried in a harsh voice:

"Silence! Milord bishop, in the name of the prisoners, the court thanks your reverence. People of Drontheimhuus, listen to the royal court of justice. The court will decide without appeal. Archers, bring in the prisoners."

Soon Ethel could hear a dull sound and a sort of movement in the dark passage beneath. The audience trembled with impatience and curiosity; the steps came nearer; halberd and musket glittered; and then six men, bareheaded, and in chains, surrounded by guards, were brought to the middle of the court. Ethel saw but the first prisoner, an old grey-bearded man in a black simarre—her father. Everything swam before her eyes, she could hear her heart beating, and leaning on the stone railing in front of her seat, she cried faintly:

"Oh, God, help me!"

The veiled woman hastened to let her inhale some salts to rouse her.

"Noble lady," said she, recovering, "have pity. Just one word, to convince me I am not the sport of evil spirits."

* Deaf to her prayer, the unknown turned silently

towards the court. Poor Ethel, with renewed strength, could but imitate her.

The president, rising, said in a slow and solemn voice :

"Prisoners, you are brought before us to judge whether you are guilty of high treason and conspiracy, in bearing arms against the royal authority of our noble sovereign. Reflect, first you are accused of high treason."

Just then a ray of light fell across one of the prisoners, who was bending his head, as though he tried to hide his face in his long curls. Ethel felt a cold shudder, she thought she recognised him, but it could be but a cruel delusion. The hall was faintly lighted and men moved about like shadows. The ebony crucifix over the president's chair could hardly be distinguished.

This young man, however, had a long cloak on, which in the distance looked green. His dishevelled hair seemed brown ; his features—but no, it could not be—it must be some horrible delusion.

The prisoners were on the bench, where the bishop had taken his place. Schumacher was at one end, and the young man with the brown hair at the other. They were separated by four of their companions in misfortune, roughly dressed, one of them being a giant.

Ethel saw the president turn to her father, saying :

"Old man ; tell us who you are, and your name."

Looking at the president, he replied :

"Formerly I was called Count of Griffenfeld and Tongsberg ; Prince of Wohn ; Prince of this same Empire ; Knight of the Royal Order of the Elephant ; Knight of the Royal Order of Dannebrog ; Knight of the Golden Fleece of Germany ; Knight of the Garter of England ; Prime Minister ; Inspector in Chief of the Universities ; High Chancellor of Denmark and of——"

The president here interrupted him :

"Prisoner, the court does not care to know what you were called, nor what you were; but what are you now called, and what are you?"

"Now," replied the old man, "I am called Jean Schumacher. I am sixty-nine. I am nothing but your old benefactor, Chancellor d'Ahlefeld."

The president appeared thunderstruck.

"I recognised you, milord count," added the ex-chancellor, "although you appeared not to know me. I must take the liberty of reminding you that we are old acquaintances."

"Schumacher, you are wasting the tribunal's time," said the president, in a rage.

The old prisoner continued:

"We have changed places, noble chancellor. Formerly I called you simply d'Ahlefeld, and you termed me 'milord count.'"

"Prisoner," replied the president; "you are damaging your own cause by recalling the former infamous sentence which has branded you."

"If the sentence was infamous, Count d'Ahlefeld, it did not rest on me."

The old man had risen when uttering these words.

"Sit down," said the president, extending his hand.

"Do not be insulting to a court and the judges who condemned you, nor to the king who appointed those judges. Remember, the king spared your life, and confine your remarks to your defence."

Schumacher only shrugged his shoulders.

"Have you anything to say to the court concerning the principal crime of which you are accused?" said the president.

As Schumacher remained silent he repeated the question.

"Are you addressing me?" said the ex-chancellor.

"I thought, my noble Count d'Ahlefeld, that you were

speaking to yourself. What crime have you against me? Have I ever given an Iscariot kiss to a friend? Have I condemned, imprisoned, dishonoured a benefactor? Have I stripped of all, him to whom I owed all? I am at a loss to know, my lord chancellor, why I was brought here. Doubtless to show your ability in causing the heads of the innocent to fall. In fact, I shall not be sorry to observe if you know how to effect my ruin as well as you know how to ruin the country, and if it but requires a stroke of your pen to cause my death, as the war with Sweden was caused by the letter added from the alphabet."

Scarcely had he ended this severe sarcasm, than the man before the table to the left of the court rose, and, bowing profoundly, said:

"Milord president, your lordships the judges, I demand that Jean Schumacher should not be allowed to speak, if he continue thus to insult his grace the president of this honoured court."

The bishop, in a calm voice, replied:

"Clerk of the court, you cannot prevent the prisoner speaking."

"You are right, your lordship," hastily said the president, "We have every intention of giving full power for the defence. I should warn the prisoner to moderate his language, as it may mar his interest."

"Evidently Count d'Ahlefeld is surer of his case than in 1677."

"Be quiet!" said the president, and at once addressed the prisoner next to the old man by asking his name.

The huge mountaineer, with his forehead bandaged, rose, saying:

"I am Han, of Klipstadur, in Iceland."

A shudder ran through the crowd, and Schumacher, whose head had fallen forward, darted a quick glance at

his formidable neighbour, from whom the other prisoners kept apart.

"Han of Iceland," demanded the president, when the terror had subsided, "what have you to say to the tribunal?"

Ethel was not less struck with the presence of this famous brigand, who had so terrified her. She looked fearfully towards the immense giant, whom her Ordener had perhaps attacked, and whose victim he had perhaps become. This painful idea pursued her. She was so absorbed by mingled emotions that she scarcely heard Han of Iceland's coarse and embarrassed answer. To her he was perhaps Ordener's murderer. She only heard the brigand declare himself chief of the insurgents' army.

"Did you offer to be so, or were you instigated by any stranger to take the command of the rebels?"

"I did not offer," the brigand replied.

"Who suggested this crime?"

"A man called Hacket."

"Who was Hacket?"

"Schumacher's agent, who called him Count of Griffenfeld."

The president then addressed Schumacher:

"Schumacher, do you know this Hacket?"

"You have forestalled me, Count d'Ahlefeld. I was about asking you the same question," replied the old man.

"Jean Schumacher, your hatred misleads you. The court will appreciate your defence," said the president.

The bishop again spoke:

"Clerk of the court," turning towards the short man, who seemed to be both recorder and prosecutor, "is this Hacket one of my flock?"

"No, your reverence."

"Is it known what has become of him?"

"He could not be found. He had disappeared."

The secretary seemed to speak with an effort.

"He has most likely vanished altogether," said Schumacher.

"Has this Hacket been looked for? Is there any description to be found of him?" continued the bishop.

Before the clerk of the court could answer, one of the prisoners rose, a young mincr, with a proud and harsh-looking face.

"You can easily have that," said he, in a loud voice. "This wretched Hacket, Schumacher's agent, is a short man, with an open face—open as the mouth of hell! Then, milord bishop, his voice is very much like that of the lord who is writing at that table, and whom your reverence calls *clerk of the court*. If this hall were less dark, and that clerk of the court had less hair to hide his face, I should say he was very much like the traitor Hacket."

"Our brother is right!" cried the other two prisoners near the young miner.

"Really!" muttered Schumacher, triumphantly.

The clerk had moved involuntarily, either with fear or with indignation, at being compared with Hacket.

The president seemed annoyed, and hastened to say:

"Prisoners, you are not to speak until you are questioned, and do not insult an administrator of justice by degrading comparisons."

"However, milord president," said the bishop, "this is but a description. If there are some points of resemblance between the clerk and the culprit Hacket, it might be of service——"

The president here interrupted him:

"Han of Iceland, you have had much to do

with Hacket. Just to satisfy his lordship, tell us if he resembled our honoured clerk of the court?"

"Not at all," said the giant, unhesitatingly.

"There, you sec, milord bishop," added the president.

The bishop, making a sign, appeared to be satisfied.

The president then addressed another prisoner in the usual way:

"What is your name?"

"Wilfred Kennebøl, from the Kole mountains."

"Were you amongst the rebels?"

"Yes, milord. The truth is better than life. I was taken prisoner at Black Pillar. I was head of the mountaineers."

"Did you incite any one to rebel?"

"The miners complained of royal oppression. For this reason government would not listen to their complaints. If you had but a mud hut and two old foxes' skins, you would like to be the master of them. Well, milord, they thought of rising, and asked us to help them. So small a service could hardly be refused between brothers, who repeat the same prayers and have the same saints. That is all."

"Did no one rouse, encourage, and lead the insurrection," said the president.

"A Lord Hacket, who was always talking of releasing a count, prisoner at Munkholm, of whom he called himself the envoy. We promised to do so. One more person at liberty little mattered to us!"

"Was this count not called Schumacher or Griffenfeld?"

"Exactly so."

"Had you ever seen him?"

"No, milord, but if it is the old man who said such a lot of names just now, I can but allow——"

"What?" interrupted the president.

"That he has a splendid grey beard, almost as good as that of my sister Maase's husband's father, who lived till he was a hundred and twenty."

In the gloomy hall it was impossible to see if this artless reply had not disappointed the president. He ordered the archers to display the fiery-looking banners.

"Wilfred Kennybol, do you recognise these banners?"

"Yes, they were given to us, in the Count of Schumacher's name, by Hacket. The count also sent arms to the miners, for we did not want them, we mountaineers who live by the carbine and the bag. And I, milord, fastened as I am like a fowl about to be roasted, from the depths of our valleys I have shot an eagle in its loftiest flight, looking but the size of a sparrow or a thrush."

"You hear, my lordships," observed the clerk of the court, addressing the judges, "the prisoner Schumacher sent both arms and banners to the rebels, through Hacket."

"Kennybol, have you anything further to say?" asked the president.

"Nothing, only that I have not deserved death. I but assisted the miners, and I can assure your lordships that my carbine, old sportsman as I am, has never been fired on one of the king's deer."

The president, without replying, began to question Kennybol's two companions. They were chiefs of the miners, and Jonas, the elder, only repeated what Kennybol had said. The other was the young man who had noticed the resemblance between the secretary and the treacherous Hacket. His name was Norbite, and he proudly owned his share in the revolt, but refused to speak of Hacket or Schumacher. He said he had sworn to be silent, and he could but remember his oath. Notwithstanding both threats and pleadings, he remained silent. Besides, he said,

he should not have rebelled for Schumacher but for his mother, who was suffering from cold and hunger. He did not deny he deserved death, but they would commit an injustice in condemning him; to kill him would kill his mother, and she had done nothing.

When Norbite ceased, the private secretary, in a few words, read out the fearful charges against the prisoners, particularly Schumacher. He read some of the seditious devices on the banners, the unanimous replies of the ex-chancellor's accomplices, even young Norbite's silence, tied by his oath.

"There remains one more prisoner to question," said he, "and we have every reason to believe he is a secret agent from the one who has so badly watched over the peace of the Drontheimhuus. If not guilty of connivance, at all events his fatal negligence has favoured the rebellion, by which those unfortunates are lost, and this Schumacher will return to the scaffold, from which he was saved so generously by the king's clemency."

Ethel, fearful for Ordener, was now in terror for her father, on hearing such horrible words, and she wept bitterly when her father rose, saying calmly:

"Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, I am lost in admiration. Have you already requested the executioner to be in attendance?"

The poor girl thought no grief could touch her now, but she was mistaken.

The sixth prisoner, a noble-looking man, was answering the president's questions, and with his head thrown back, he spoke in a firm and loud voice:

"My name is Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorwick, Knight of Dannebrog."

The clerk, amazed, cried: "The Viceroy's son!"

"The Viceroy's son!" echoed a thousand voices.

The president fell back in his chair, the judges,

leaning towards one another, looked like trees in a contrary wind; but the agitation was far greater with the audience. Some rushed to the stone corners, others to the iron gratings; the whole crowd murmured with one voice. The guards, forgetting to maintain silence, added to the universal clamour by uttering their surprise. Who could depict Ethel's feelings of joy and grief? He was before her. She could see him, and he saw her not. There was the well-beloved Ordener, her Ordener she thought dead, she knew he was lost to her, the friend who had deceived her, and whom she adored more than ever. He was there—yes, there! No dream, but Ordener himself, whom she had met in dreams far more often than in reality. Why was he there—as a guardian angel, or an evil genius? Must she hope, or was she to fear for him? When he was about giving his name, she was the first to recognise him, and oppressed with mingled sensations, overpowering in their intensity, like a flame that is extinguished by too much fuel, Ethel fainted.

A second time she recovered through the care of the mysterious stranger, and looked eagerly towards the young man, still calmly standing amidst the general uproar. Ordener Guldenlew! The name still rung in her ears when order was restored in the court. Ethel noticed with pain that his arm was in a sling, that he was manacled, that his cloak was much torn, and his sword gone. Nothing escaped her loving eyes. She could not clasp him to her, but her soul was filled with his image, and it must be added, to love's shame and honour, that in that room, where her father and his persecutors still remained, Ethel saw but one man.

Silence being restored, the president continued to question the viceroy's son:

"Milord baron——" said he, in a trembling voice.

"I am not called 'milord baron,' but simply *Ordener*

Guldenlew, like the one formerly Count of Griffenfeld is called *Jean Schumacher*."

The president, for a moment astonished, added :

"Well then, *Ordener Guldenlew*, some unhappy accident has doubtless placed you in this position. The rebels took you prisoner, and compelled you to join them; that explains, no doubt, why you were found amongst them."

The secretary rose, saying :

"Noble judges, the name alone of the Viceroy of Norway's son is quite sufficient. Baron *Ordener Guldenlew* cannot be a rebel. Our illustrious president has clearly shown the reason of his arrest. The noble prisoner's only fault is, to have kept his name unknown. Let him at once be liberated—all proceedings cease against him. We regret he should even have sat on the same seat with that criminal *Schumacher* and his accomplices."

"What are you saying?" cried *Ordener*.

"The clerk of the court will no longer take any proceedings against you," said the president.

"He is wrong," said *Ordener* distinctly. "I alone ought to be prisoner, alone judged and condemned, for I alone am guilty."

"You the only guilty one!" cried the president.

"You the only guilty one!" repeated the secretary.

The audience was equally surprised.

Poor *Ethel* shuddered. She could see but death for *Ordener*, forgetting his confession had saved her father.

"Silence in the court!" cried the president to the halberdiers, trying to gather his ideas together and regain his presence of mind. "*Ordener Guldenlew*, explain yourself," continued he.

The young man was for a moment lost in thought. Then, with a sigh, he rose, and calmly replied :

"Yes, a fearful death awaits me, and I had life

before me in all its glory and happiness. God alone knows the heart's secret; but I have one great duty to perform. I shall sacrifice blood and, perhaps, honour; but I shall die without remorse and without repentance. Do not be surprised, your lordships; there are mysteries in the soul of man which you cannot fathom, of which Heaven alone can judge. Listen, and act towards me as your conscience suggests; but absolve these unfortunate men, particularly Schumacher, who has already suffered for more imaginary crimes than any one man could commit. Yes, my noble judges, I am guilty, and alone guilty. Schumacher is innocent, the others only misled. The promoter of the rebellion is myself."

"You?" cried the president and the clerk of the court.

"Yes. I am anxious to end this, for in accusing myself, I justify these men. I instigated the miners to rise in Schumacher's name. I gave the banners, the gold, and the arms, in the prisoner of Munkholm's name. Hacket was my agent."

At the mention of Hacket the clerk of the court looked stupefied.

"I will spare your time, milords. I was taken in the miners' ranks. I caused the insurrection. I alone did everything. It is now for you to judge if I have proved my own crime. I have proved Schumacher's innocence, and that of the other poor creatures you call his accomplices," said the young man, raising his eyes to heaven.

Ethel could scarcely breathe, yet she fancied that Ordener, although trying to justify her father, uttered his name very bitterly. She was astonished and frightened, without quite understanding the young man's words. The first thing that struck her was impending misfortune. The president was influenced

by the same feeling. He looked as if his ears deceived him, and, addressing the viceroy's son, he said :

"If you are alone the author of this rebellion, what were your motives ? "

"I cannot say."

Ethel shuddered when she heard the president's voice saying :

"Had you not an intrigue with Schumacher's daughter ? "

But her Ordener, indignantly, advanced towards the bench to reply :

"Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, be content with taking my life. Respect a noble and innocent girl. Do not attempt to dishonour her a second time."

The blood rushed into poor Ethel's face, although she did not understand the words on which her defender lay such stress—a *second time*! The president's enraged face showed he understood them.

"Ordener Guldenlew, do not forget the respect you owe to the King's court of justice nor to its chief officers. In the name of the bench, I reprimand you. Again I request you to tell your motive for committing the crime of which you are accused ? "

"I repeat, I cannot tell you."

"Was it not," said the clerk, "to deliver Schumacher ? "

Ordener remained silent.

"Do not be dumb, prisoner Ordener. It has been proved you communicated with Schumacher," said the president, "and confessing your guilt but adds to his. You had an extraordinary interest in going to Munkholm. This diamond buckle can so prove. Do you recognise it as having been yours ? " said the president, taking a buckle off the desk.

"Yes ; but by what chance——"

"A dying rebel gave it to our clerk, saying he had

received it from you for having rowed you across the Port of Drontheim to the Munkholm fortress. Your lordships, must it not have been a matter of the highest importance to Ordener Guldenlew to reach the prison, that of Schumacher's, for him thus to pay a simple boatman——?"

"Ah!" said the prisoner Kennybol, "what his lordship says is true. I recognise the buckle. It is my poor comrade Guldon Stayper's tale."

"Silence!" cried the president. "Let Ordener Guldenlew answer."

"I will not disguise," replied he, "that I wished to see Schumacher; but as for the buckle, that is nothing. Diamonds are not allowed in the fortress. The boatman complained of the crossing and pleaded poverty, so I gave him what I could not keep myself."

"Pardon me, milord," interrupted the secretary in turn; "but the rule excepts the viceroy's son. You could then——"

"I did not wish to be known."

"Why?" said the president.

"I cannot say."

"The understanding you had with Schumacher and his daughter proves the object of your plot was their deliverance."

Schumacher had been silent, simply at times shrugging his shoulders. Now he rose, saying:

"Deliverance! The object of the infernal plot was both to compromise and ruin me, as it is now. Do you think Ordener Guldenlew would have admitted his crime had he not been taken in the midst of the rebels? Oh! I see he has inherited his father's hatred for me. And as to the understanding he had with myself and daughter, let this cursed Guldenlew know that my daughter has inherited my hatred for him; for the whole race of Guldenlew and d'Ahlefeld!"

Ordener sighed deeply. Ethel denied in a whisper her father's words. Schumacher took his seat, trembling with passion.

"The court will decide," said the president.

While Schumacher was speaking, Ordener sat with his eyes lowered, silently listening, but when he had concluded he rose, saying :

"Oh! noble judges, hear me. Weigh well the case, remembering that Ordener Guldenlew alone is guilty, therefore Schumacher is innocent, and the others but tools of Hacket, my agent. I compassed all the rest."

"Your lordships," said Kennybol, "I can vouch for the truth of his lordship's words. When he was at my brother Braal's house at Surb, he confided to me the secret of his journey. He was then on his way to the cavern of Walderhog in search of Han, hoping to make him our chief. Naming him will not, I trust, bring me ill-luck, and it is also true we were deceived by that cursed Hacket. We are not then deserving of death."

"Clerk of the court," said the president, "the trial has closed. Members of the court, give your opinion."

The Clerk of the court, with his eyes fixed on the president and stroking his lace-bands rose, bowing to the court, and distinctly pronounced these words :

"Milord president, honoured judges, the prosecution is complete. Ordener Guldenlew has tarnished his name for ever, proved his own guilt, without shewing the ex-chancellor Schumacher's innocence, nor those of his accomplices—Han of Iceland, Wilfred Kennybol, Jorás and Norbith. I claim the justice of the court, and pray that the six prisoners may be declared guilty of high treason."

A murmur went through the crowd, and the court was about to rise, when the bishop claimed a moment's attention :

"Learned judges, the prisoners' defence has yet to be heard, coming as it does, always the last. Would that they had a better speaker, for I am old and feeble. I have no ability, but that which God has given me. I am surprised at the clerk of the court's stern request. There is nothing to prove my client Schumacher's crime. He in no way can be made a party to the rising of the miners, since my other client, Ordener Guldenlew, declares he made use of Schumacher's name, and confesses he alone is guilty of this reprehensible sedition. Therefore, the case against Schumacher must be dismissed. I recommend the other prisoners to mercy, they have only been misguided like the sheep of the Good Shepherd, and even young Ordener Guldenlew has one great merit in the eyes of the Lord, he confesses his crime. Consider milords, he is at an age when men do err and fall, yet God still helps them. Ordener Guldenlew has scarcely passed a fourth of the life which now weighs over me. In judging him, think of his youth and inexperience, and take not away the life which God has so lately given him."

The old man ceased, and placed himself near Ordener, who was smiling. The judges retired to consider their verdict. While their fate was being decided, the prisoners remained unmoved between two rows of halberdiers. Schumacher, with bent head, was lost in thought; the giant looked confidently from right to left; Jonas and Kennybol murmured prayers. Norbite from time to time stamped his feet on the ground and clanked his chains. Between him and the bishop sat Ordener, his arms crossed, his eyes raised heavenwards, reciting the penitential psalms.

At the judges' absence, the crowd broke out with exclamations. The famous captive of Munkholm, the renowned demon of Iceland, but above all

the viceroy's son, occupied their thoughts and words. Cries of pity mixed with those of laughter were to be heard on all sides, sounds rising and falling like flames in the wind. Hours passed, still no one issued from the judges' chamber; and the two soldiers continued to march to and fro before the threshold like two phantoms.

At dawn only the door opened, amidst the profound silence of the crowd.

The president, followed by the judges, took their seats on the bench.

The clerk of the court, who was buried in his thoughts during their absence, now addressed them. Bowing, he said:

"Milord president, what is the judgment without appeal that has been given in the name of the king? We are prepared to listen with deep attention!"

The judge to the right of the president rose with a parchment in his hands.

"His grace, our noble president, fatigued by the length of the trial, has deputed us of the High Court of Justice of the Drontheimhuus, presiding over this honoured court, to read the sentence given in the King's name. We are going to fulfil this painful but honourable duty, requesting the audience to remain silent whilst sentence is pronounced."

Amidst beating hearts, he solemnly pronounced the following words:

"In the name of our honoured and legitimate sovereign, Christiern. This is the sentence passed by the judges in the High Court of Justice of the Drontheimhuus, to the best of their belief concerning Jean Schumacher, state prisoner, Wilfred Kennybol, mountaineer of Kole, Jonas, royal miner, Norbite, royal miner, Han of Klipstadur in Iceland, and

Orderer Guldenlew, Baron of Thorwick, Knight of Dannebrog, all accused of high treason. Han of Iceland, further accused of assassination, incendiarism, and brigandage.

"1. Jean Schumacher, not guilty.

"2. Wilfred Kennybol, Jonas and Norbite, guilty; being misled, the court makes allowances for them:

"3. Han of Iceland, guilty of all the crimes with which he is charged.

"4. Orderer Guldenlew, guilty of high treason."

As the judge paused a moment, Orderer, full of joy, looked towards him.

"Jean Schumacher, the court absolves you of all share in this. You return to your prison.

"Kennybol, Jonas and Norbite, your sentence is reduced to penal servitude for life, and a fine of a thousand crowns each.

"Han of Klipstadur, assassin and incendiary, you will be taken on to the parade, and hanged by the neck until you are dead.

"Orderer Guldenlew, traitor, after being stripped of your rank before this court, you, with a torch in your hand, will be led to the same place, where your head will be severed, your body burned, your ashes thrown to the winds, your head stuck on a pole.

"All of you may now withdraw. Such is the King's just sentence."

The sentence was hardly finished when a fearful cry was heard, which struck a greater chill to all than the hearing of the sentence of death just pronounced. Orderer, looking calm and bright, turned pale at the sound.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LOVE'S APPEAL.

THE young man's noble conspiracy has succeeded. Schumacher's life is saved, and his well-beloved has still her father's protection. All is now over, and he has but to die.

Let those who have thought him guilty or mad, not judge the generous Ordener, whose sole thought on joining the rebels was to frustrate the plot against Schumacher, if not, to bear the punishment by taking everything on his own shoulders.

"Alas," thought he, "Schumacher is guilty; but, driven to the crime by his long captivity and misfortunes, it is pardonable. He only wants his freedom, and incites rebellion only to gain it.

"What would become of my Ethel, if her father lost his life on the scaffold; another disgrace added to her life; without protection; without help; alone in her cell or living amidst a crowd of enemies?"

This thought made him gladly sacrifice himself. Can there be greater happiness than in giving up life to the beloved one even for a smile or a tear?

He had been seized amongst the rebels, told a generous lie, taken before the judges who were to condemn Schumacher, sentenced to an ignominious death, his name tarnished, but he has saved his Ethel's father, and for the rest—What matter?

He is now chained in a damp cell, air and light coming through gloomy loop-holes near him, some black bread, and a pitcher of water the only food he

will ever again take, Chained both hand and foot, and even chains round his neck, through every hour he is lost in delicious dreams, bringing more life to him, than another has in a year.

"Perhaps my memory will not perish in every heart. A tear will be dropped for the blood I shed. She will perhaps sometimes think of him who has sacrificed his life for her. In her girlish dreams she will sometimes think of her friend. Besides, what follows death? Cannot souls delivered from their prison-house watch over those so well beloved here, have some mysterious intercourse with those in captivity here, and in secret dispense some angelic virtue and some joy from Heaven?"

Yet Ordener was oppressed with the thought of the hatred Schumacher had shewn towards him at the trial. When sentence was passed on him, on hearing that piercing cry, he alone recognised the voice—his Ethel's. Should he never again see her, never press her hand again, never again hear the voice of her, for whom he was about to die? Just then the old rusty hinges turned in their sockets, and the young man thought the executioner had arrived to do his duty. The door opened, and a pale face appeared looking like a vision. It was she—his Ethel!

She threw herself into his arms, kissing the very chains which bound him, letting her tears fall on his hands. She could not speak, her very words were lost in sobs.

He had never felt such happiness. He pressed her to his heart; Heaven and earth could not have separated them. His approaching death gave solemnity to his feelings, and he held her as though ~~it~~ were for all eternity.

Ordener asked her no questions. She was there. He felt all that love could do, had been done.

Both were silent. There are feelings which cannot be expressed ; besides, what is the sound of a voice compared to the feelings of the soul ? The young girl at length raised her head from his shoulder.

"Ordener," said she, "I am come to save you," speaking hopefully.

"Save me, Ethel ! Flight is impossible !"

"Alas, I know that but too well. The castle is surrounded by soldiers. Every door is guarded by archers and gaolers, but I can suggest other means."

"Ethel, do not buoy yourself up with vain hopes that a stroke of the axe will so soon dispel."

"Ordener, pray cease ; you shall not die ! Rid me of this frightful idea ; yet again picture it to me with all its horrors, that I may complete my sacrifice, and your safety."

Ordener, looking at her tenderly, said :

"Your sacrifice ! What do you mean ?"

She buried her face in her hands.

"Oh, God !" she sobbingly cried.

Recovering herself, she raised her eyes smilingly—beautiful as an angel going to Heaven.

"Listen, 'my Ordener,'" she cried. "The scaffold will never be raised for you, if you but promise to marry Ulrica d'Ahlefeld."

"My Ethel uttering the name of Ulrica d'Ahlefeld ?"

"Do not interrupt me," said she, with a martyr's calmness. "The Countess d'Ahlefeld sent me, and you have but to promise to wed the high-chancellor's daughter, and you will obtain the king's pardon. Thinking I should have influence over you, I was the messenger chosen to ask you to swear to marry Ulrica, and thus to live for her."

"Ethel," said the condemned man, coldly, "on leaving my cell, tell them to send the executioner."

Pale and trembling she stood before him; then falling on her knees, she wrung her hands, crying :

"What have I done to him?"

Ordener, with his eyes fixed, kept silence.

"Milord," said she, dragging herself towards him, "you do not answer. Will you not speak to me? I have nothing to live for."

With tears the young man tearfully answered :

"Ethel, you no longer love me."

"Oh, God!" cried the poor girl, pressing him wildly. "I do not love him! You tell me I do not love you, my Ordener. Can you really have said so?"

"You despise me, therefore you cannot love me."

The moment he had said these words he repented, for Ethel, throwing her arms around him, cried heart-rendingly :

"Pardon me, my dearly-loved Ordener, forgive me as I forgive you. I despise you? Oh, God! are you not my pride, my love, my all? In my words was there aught but love and admiration? Alas! I feel deeply wounded that you have thus spoken to me. I came but to save you, my adored one, by sacrificing myself."

Kissing away her tears, the young man replied :

"Was it not showing but little respect for me, to propose that I should buy my life by breaking my oath, sacrificing my love, abandoning my Ethel, renouncing the love for which I am about to shed my blood?"

Ethel answered, sighing deeply :

"Ordener, do not too quickly judge me. I have, perhaps, more strength than most women have, but from my very dungeon I can see the scaffold on the parade being raised for you. You cannot imagine my sufferings, as I see them slowly preparing for the death of him who is life to me. I was near the Countess d'Ahlefeld when your fatal sentence was

pronounced. She afterwards came to the cell, where I had gone with my father, and suggested the proposal I have now made to you. To save your life, I must lose you for ever, and let another enjoy the happiness of the forsaken Ethel. I had to choose between my misfortune and your death, and I did not hesitate between the two."

He raised this angel's hand to his lips.

"I do not hesitate either, Ethel. If you knew why I was about to die, you would not offer me life, and Ulrica d'Ahlefeld's hand."

"What mystery is this?"

"That secret I must keep from you, my Ethel. I must die without your knowing whether to be grateful to me, or to hate me for so choosing."

"You will then die, and the scaffold they are now raising is for my Ordener. No human power can save him from this fate. Look at me—me, your companion, your slave, and listen to me without anger, and answer your Ethel, as you would your God. Are you sure you could not be happy with this woman, this Ulrica d'Ahlefeld? Are you sure? Do not turn your head away. She is doubtless beautiful, good, and gentle, and better far than her for whom you are about to die. You are so young, and so noble, to perish on the scaffold. You could pass your time with her in some gay city, and you would forget this gloomy dungeon. Your days would pass in peace, without seeking news of me. Banish me from your heart, even from your thoughts. Live, Ordener, leave me here; it is for me to die; and believe me, when once you are in the arms of another, do not be anxious about me, I should not suffer long."

She ceased, for her voice was lost in tears, but her look remained steadfast to gain that fatal victory, which to her meant death.

"Ethel, cease to speak on that subject, and let no names but our own now pass our lips."

"Alas, alas! then you prefer death?"

"It must be so, I will joyfully face the scaffold for you. I should go to the altar with horror with any other woman. Do not speak of it again, you both distress and offend me."

She still murmured: "Oh, God! he will die and such an infamous death!"

"Believe me, Ethel," said the condemned man, smiling, "there is less dishonour in dying than there would be in living at such a price."

He turned for a moment towards the door. And standing there he saw an old priest.

"What do you want?" said Ordener roughly.

"Milord, I have been sent by the Countess d'Ahlefeld. You did not see me, so I remained silent."

Ordener had had but eyes for Ethel, and she for him—she had forgotten her companion.

"I am," continued the old man, "the priest charged——"

"I understand," said the young man. "I am ready."

Advancing, the priest said:

"God is ready to receive you, my son."

"Father," replied Ordener, "I remember your face, I must have met you somewhere."

"I recognise you also, my son. I met you in the tower of Vyglä. We have both found how little dependence there is in vows. You promised to have those twelve unfortunate men pardoned. Not knowing you were the viceroy's son, I did not believe in your promises; in giving me this assurance, milord, you reckoned on your rank and power."

Ordener completed the words which Athanasius Munder did not dare to finish.

"Now I can obtain no clemency, not even for myself; .

you are right. I thought little of the future, and I am punished, for it has shewn me my weakness."

"God is powerful," said the priest, bending his head; but raising his eyes kindly to Ordener, he added: "God is good!"

"Listen, father, I wish to keep the promise I made to you at Vygla. When I am dead, find my father the viceroy at Berghen, and tell him his son's last wishes were, pardon for your twelve protégés, and I am sure he will grant it."

A tear ran down the old man's face.

"My son, how noble of you to think of pardon for others, when you reject it for yourself. I was deeply moved by your refusal, although springing from an excess of passionate feeling. I say to myself *Unde scelus?* How is it that a man with such feelings can be guilty of the crime for which you are condemned?"

"Father, I will not tell this angel and I cannot tell you. Believe me the reason for my conviction was not a crime."

"Explain yourself, my son."

"Do not insist," said the young man, with firmness. "Let me carry to the grave the secret cause of my death."

"This young man cannot be guilty," murmured the priest, fixing a black cross on a kind of altar, roughly formed of a slab of granite, placed against the damp prison wall. He then stood a lighted lamp and an open bible near the crucifix.

"My son, I will return in a few hours, leaving you to prayer and meditation. And let us now go," said he to Ethiel, who had remained silent during this solemn time; "we must leave the prisoner. Time flies."

"Father," said Ethel, with a heavenly look in her eyes, "I cannot follow you until you have united Ethel Schumacher to her husband Ordener Gulden-

lew," and turning to Ordener, she continued: "If you were free in all your rank and power, I would not unite my fatal destiny to yours. But now that my misfortunes cannot affect you, now that you are like myself a captive, disgraced, oppressed and about to die, I dare to hope you will allow me to be your companion in death, as I could not be your companion in life. You love me enough to feel that I shall cease to live when you die."

The condemned man fell at her feet, kissing the hem of her garment.

"You," continued she to the old man, "will stand as in lieu of family or fathers, this cell our temple, this stone our altar. Here is my ring. We kneel to God and to you. Bless us and read the sacred words which unite Ethel Schumacher to Ordener Guldenlew, her lord."

The priest gazed on them kneeling before him with astonishment and pity.

"My children, what are you doing?"

"Father," said the young girl, "time flies. God and death are awaiting us."

In life at times, we are ruled by some irresistible power, which conquers us, and the priest sighing, replied:

"The Lord forgive me, if in complying with your wishes I am guilty. You love one another, you can love each other but a short time longer in this world, and I do not think I am failing in my duty by legitimising your love."

The irrevocable ceremony was over, and they both rose after the priest's final blessing. They were husband and wife.

The condemned man now felt all the bitterness of death, since life offered so much happiness. The girl, in her simplicity, felt all the pride of a young wife.

"Are we not happy to die together, my Ordener, since in life we could never have been united? I shall see you mount the scaffold from my dungeon window, so that both our souls may go to Heaven together. If I die before the axe falls, I will wait for you. Are we not now married, my adored one?"

He pressed her to his heart, uttering the words which filled her whole soul:

"Ethel, then you are mine."

"My children," said the chaplain, tenderly, "it is now time to bid each other farewell."

Ethel, casting herself at the condemned man's feet, cried:

"Farewell, my dearly loved Ordener; my lord, give me your blessing?"

The prisoner pronounced the touching words, and, turning towards the priest, he was surprised to find him kneeling before him.

"What is it, father?" said he in surprise.

The old man, looking at him tenderly, humbly replied "Your blessing, my son."

"May Heaven bless you, and bring you all the happiness your prayers have brought to other men," said Ordener solemnly, with much emotion.

Soon in the gloomy vault were heard the last farewells, and the last embraces were given; soon the rusty hinges turned in their sockets, and the iron door separated young husband and wife, who were about to die, but yet hoped to meet in Heaven.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HAN REVEALED.

“**B**ARON VÆTHAÛN, colonel of musketeers at Munkholm, which of the soldiers under your command made Han of Iceland prisoner at the Black Pillar? Name him, that he may receive the thousand crowns, promised for his capture.” Thus spoke the president.

The judges were still on their bench, for, according to the ancient custom in Norway, when judges decided without appeal, they must remain in court till the judgment be carried out. Before them stands the giant, with the cord round his neck by which in a few hours he will be suspended. The colonel, seated at the clerk’s table rose and bowed to the bench and to the bishop, who had resumed his seat.

“Your lordships, the soldier who took Han of Iceland prisoner is now here, Toric Belfast, the second best musketeer in my regiment.”

“Let him come forward,” replied the president “to receive the promised reward.”

A young soldier of the Munkholm musketeers presented himself.

“You are Toric Belfast?”

“Yes, your grace.”

“You took Han of Iceland prisoner?”

“Yes, by the aid of Belzebub, may it please your excellency!”

A heavy purse was placed on the bench.

“Do you recognise this man as the famous Han of

Iceland?" said the president, pointing towards the enchained giant.

"I know pretty Cathe's face better than Han of Iceland's. By the glory of Belphégore, I can swear if Han of Iceland is anywhere it is in that great devil's form."

"Toric Belfast, here are the thousand crowns promised by the high court of justice."

Just as the soldier was advancing towards the bench, a voice was heard in the crowd: "Musketeer of Munkholm, you did not take Han of Iceland prisoner."

"By all the happy devils," said the soldier. "I have little but my pipe, but I vow to give ten thousand golden crowns to him who has just spoken if he can prove the truth of his words."

Crossing his arms he looked round the audience.

"Well, let him who has just spoken shew himself."

"It is I," said a little man, who was pressing forward to reach the centre of the court.

The new comer was wrapped in matting made of rushes, and seal skin, such as is used by the Greenlanders, which, falling round him, looked like a conical-shaped hut. His beard was black, and his thick hair was of the same colour, hanging well over his face, and red eyebrows, and his face, the little that could be seen, was hideous. Neither his arms nor his hands could be perceived.

"Ah! it is you," said the soldier, with a shout of laughter, "and you only, my fine sir, that have had the honour of taking this diabolical giant?"

The little man shaking his head and smiling maliciously replied:

"It is I."

Just then Baron Vøthaun thought he recognised in this singular man the mysterious being who at Skongen had given him notice of the approach of the

rebels; the Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, the host of the ruin of Arbar; the clerk of the court, a certain peasant of Oëlmoe, who wore the same kind of matting, and who had shewn him Han of Iceland's retreat. All three being some distance from each other could not make each other know their passing impression, which was soon effaced by the difference they remarked both of costume and feature.

"It was really you?" continued the soldier ironically. "Were it not for your seal costume of Greenland, by the looks you cast at me, I should be inclined to think you were the same odd-looking dwarf who was anxious to fight with me at the Spladgest about a fortnight ago; it was the day they brought in the miner's corpse, Gill Stadt."

"Gill Stadt?" interrupted the little man starting.

"Yes, Gill Stadt," continued the soldier indifferently; "the discarded lover of a girl who was the mistress of one of our comrades, for whom he died like a fool."

"Did you not have also the body of one of your officers brought in at Spladgest?" said the little man.

"Precisely so. I shall never forget that day. I had forgotten at what hour the retreat was at the Spladgest, so I was nearly being degraded on going into the fortress. That officer was Captain Dispolsen."

At the name, the clerk of the court at once arose.

"These two people are wasting the court's time; we must beg milord president to put an end to this useless language."

"I wish for nothing better," said Toric Belfast; "by my Cathe's honour, provided your lordships will award me the thousand crowns promised for the head of Han, for I made him prisoner."

"You lie," cried the little man.

The soldier felt for his sword.

"You are fortunate, scoundrel, in being in the presence of justice; in that case, a soldier, even a Munkholm musketeer, must not use his arms."

"The reward belongs to me," added the little man coldly, "for without me you would never have taken Han of Iceland."

The soldier said furiously he had taken Han of Iceland, for he had fallen on the battle field.

"Well," said his adversary "You may have taken him, but it was I who knocked him down; had I not done that, you would never have taken him prisoner, therefore the thousand crowns belong to me."

"It is false," replied the soldier; "you never knocked him down; the one who did was a kind of spirit covered in the skins of beasts."

"It is I!"

"No, no!"

The president ordered silence, and again asked Colonel Vœthaün if Toric Belfast had really brought in Han of Iceland prisoner. Having the reply in the affirmative, he declared the reward to belong to the soldier.

The little man ground his teeth, Just as the musketeer was about to receive the purse, he cried:

"One minute, lord president. The high court of justice declared the sum should only be given to him who delivered Han of Iceland into their hands."

"Well?" said the judges.

Turning towards the giant, the little man cried:

"This man is not Han of Iceland!"

A murmur of astonishment went through the hall.

The president and the clerk of the court were much agitated.

"No," repeated the little man, with energy, "the money does not belong to that cursed Munkholm musketeer, for that man is not Han of Iceland!"

"Halberdier," said the president; "take away that madman. . He has lost his reason."

The bishop then spoke :

"Allow me to observe, honoured president, that in refusing to hear this man, you deprive the condemned men, here, of all chance of escape. I must request that the enquiry continue."

"Reverend bishop; the court will soon satisfy you," replied the president; and addressing the giant, he said :

"You have sworn that you are Han of Iceland. Before your death, do you still declare the same."

The giant answered :

"I declare it. I am Han of Iceland !"

"You hear, lord bishop ?"

The little man cried out at the same time :

"You lie, mountaineer from Kole ! you lie ! Why persist in bearing a name which will be your undoing. Remember how fatal it has already proved."

"I am Han of Klipstadur in Iceland," repeated the giant, fixing his eyes on the clerk of the court.

Approaching the Munkholm musketeer, who was looking on this curious scene :

"Mountaineer of Kole, Han of Iceland drinks human blood, 'tis said. If you are he, drink, here is some !"

Scarcely had he uttered the words, when he plunged a dagger into the musketeer's heart, and threw the corpse at the feet of the giant.

Cries of terror mingled with horror arose on all sides. The soldiers who were guarding the giant drew back. The little man, quick as lightning, sprung on the mountaineer, and plunged his dagger into him, and he fell over the soldier's body. Throwing aside the matting, his false beard and wig, he showed himself in his hideous dress of beasts' skins, his face creating greater horror amongst the people than the

bloody dagger with which he had committed two murders.

"Now, judges! Where is Han of Iceland?"

"Guards, seize that monster!" cried the terrified president.

Throwing his dagger down on the floor:

"That is no use to me now, as there are no soldiers from Munkholm here" he cried.

He gave himself up without further resistance to the halberdiers and archers, who surrounded him, preparing to take him by assault, as they would a town. He was chained to the prisoners' bench, while a litter bore away both his victims, the mountaineer still breathing.

It is impossible to picture the feelings of terror, astonishment and indignation which agitated the people, the guards and the judges during this horrible scene.

While the brigand sat calm and unmoved on the fatal bench, curiosity kept all silent, the rapt attention added to the quietude.

The bishop again now rose.

"Your lordships, the judges," said he——

The brigand interrupted him:

"Bishop of Drontheim, I am Han of Iceland. Do not take the trouble to defend me."

The clerk of the court rose:

"Noble president——"

The monster cut short his words:

"Clerk of the court, I am Han of Iceland. Do not trouble yourself to accuse me."

Then, with his feet steeped in blood, he looked fiercely and coldly towards the bench, the archers, and the crowd, and men seemed terrified under the glance of this man, alone, disarmed, and chained.

"Listen, judges. Do not expect many words from

me. 'I am the the demon of Klipstadur. My mother is old Iceland, the island of volcanoes. Formerly it was but a mountain, then a giant, falling from Heaven, leant so heavily on the summit that it fell. I do not wish to speak of myself. I am a descendant of Ingulphus the Exterminator, and I carry his spirit within me. I have committed more murders, and caused more incendiaries than you have pronounced judgments—the whole of you—in your lives. I have secrets in common with Chancellor d'Ahlefeld. I could drink all the blood in your veins with delight. By nature, I hate men, my mission is to injure them. Colonel of the Munkholm musketeers, it was I who warned you that the miners would pass through Black Pillar, sure then that you would kill a number in the defiles; it was I who crushed a battalion of your regiment with blocks of rock. I avenged my son. Now, judges, my son is dead. I come here seeking death. Ingulphus's soul weighs me down; I am alone; I have no heir to whom to transmit it; I am tired of life, as mine now offers neither a lesson nor an example to one after me. Besides, I am no longer thirsty, for I have quaffed enough blood. Here I am, you can now drink mine."

He ceased, and all voices echoed his fearful words.

The bishop said :

"My son, why have you committed so many crimes?"

The brigand laughed, saying :

"Upon my word, reverend bishop, something seemed to drive me to do it; not for the sake of enriching myself, like your brother Bishop of Borghem did."

"The Lord does not always abide in all his ministers," replied the old man humbly. "You are insulting me and I wish to defend you."

"Your reverence is losing time. Just ask your brother Bishop of Scalholt, in Iceland. By Ingulphus! it does seem strange—that one bishop should have

been at my cradle, and watched over my life, and another one over my burial. Bishop, you are an old fool!"

"My son, do you believe in God?"

"Why not? I hope there is a God, that I may blaspheme him."

"Stop, fellow. You are going to die, and you will not throw yourself at Christ's feet."

Han of Iceland, shrugging his shoulders, said: "If I did, it would be something like the policeman of Koll, who, in kissing the king's foot, knocked him over."

The bishop, deeply moved, resumed his seat.

"Now, judges," continued Han of Iceland, "what are you waiting for? If I had been in your place and you in mine, I would not have kept you so long waiting for your sentence of death."

The judges retired, but shortly returned, and the president read aloud the sentence with the usual form, condemning Han of Iceland to be hanged by the neck till death followed.

"That is all right," said the brigand. "Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, I know enough about you to obtain the same fate for you, but live on, as you do men so much harm. At all events, now I shall not go to Nysthiene."

The clerk of the court ordered the guards to put him in the Lion of Sleswig's den while a cell was being prepared for him, near where the musketeers were quartered:

"Near the Munkholm musketeers," repeated the monster joyfully.

CHAPTER XL.

THE LOST CASKET.

JUST as Ordener's sentence was being passed at Munkholm, Oglypiglap, the new keeper of the Spladgest of Drontheim, and Benignus Spiagudry's successor, was awakened by several heavy knocks at the door. He rose with regret, and dazzled by the light from his brass lantern, complaining against the damp from the mortuary, opened the door to those who had allowed him so little repose. They were fishermen from Lake Sparbo, who were bringing in a body on a litter covered with rushes and sea-weed—a body they had found in the lake. They deposited their burden in the mortuary, and Oglypiglap gave them a receipt, so that they might claim their reward.

Alone in the Spladgest, he undressed the corpse, remarkable for its length and thinness. The first thing he noticed was an immense wig.

"I know this wig. Why, it belonged to that elegant young Frenchman, and here are the postillion Crammer's boots, who was crushed by his horses running over him. And—what the devil does this mean? here is old Professor Singramtax's black coat, the old scholar who lately drowned himself. Who is this new comer, dressed in my old acquaintance's clothes?"

The face had lost all form and feature, so he searched the pockets and found some old parchment, covered with slime. Wiping it with his leather apron, he managed to read these half-effaced words:

"Rudbeck, Saxon grammarian; Arngrim, bishop of Holum. In Norway there are but two counties, Larwig and Jarlsberg, and one barony. Silver mines only at Kongsberg; loadstone, asbestos at Sund Moër; amethysts at Guldbranshal; chalcedony, agates, jasper

in the Farœ isles. At Nonkahiva, in time of famine, men eat their wives and children. Thormodus Thorpœus Islaf, Bishop of Scalholt, first Icelandic historian. Mercury played at chess with the moon, and gained the seventy-second part of a day. Maelstrom, a whirlpool. *Hirundo*, *hirudo*. Cicero, glory. Frode, the scholar. Odin consulted the head of Minier, the sage. Mahomet and his pigeon. Sertorius and his goat. More the soil—less gypsum."

"I cannot believe my eyes," cried he, letting the parchment fall. "Why, it is the writing of my old master, Benignus Spiagudry!"

Examining the corpse more closely, he recognised the long hands, the hair, and the body generally.

"When he was accused of sacrilege and necromancy they were not far wrong," said Oglypiglap, shaking his head. "The devil must have carried him off to bury him in the Lake of Sparbo, but we should never have believed that Dr. Spiagudry, who had kept others so long in his hotel for the dead, should one day be brought there himself."

The little philosophic Laplander raised the body to place it on one of the six slabs, when he noticed that something heavy was attached to the unfortunate Spiagudry's neck with a leather strap.

"It is most likely a stone, with which the devil threw him into the lake," muttered he.

He was mistaken. It was a small iron casket, shut with a clasp, on which was a coat-of-arms.

"There is doubtless some devilry in this box," said he, "for this man was a sorcerer. I shall take the casket to the bishop. There is perhaps a devil inside."

Placing the corpse in the mortuary, he carried the casket to the bishop's palace, muttering some prayers on the way to protect himself from the terrible box he was carrying.

CHAPTER XLI.

A SUDDEN CONVERSION.

HAN OF ICELAND and Schumacher were both in the dungeon of Sleswig. The ex-chancellor, though discharged, was thinking bitterly as he walked slowly up and down; the condemned brigand, surrounded by guards, was laughing at his chains. The two prisoners had long been silently observing each other, feeling they were both enemies to mankind.

"Who are you?" said the ex-chancellor to the brigand.

"I will tell you my name, that you may shun me. I am Han of Iceland."

Schumacher, advancing, said:

"Take my hand."

"Do you wish me to devour it?"

"Han of Iceland I like you, because you detest mankind."

"That is the reason I hate you."

"Listen. Like you I hate men; because I have tried to benefit them, and they have returned me evil for good."

"You do not hate them in the same way as I do. I detest them, because they have benefitted me, and I have returned evil for good."

Schumacher shuddered at the monster's look. He could not sympathise with a nature like that.

"Yes," cried he, "I execrate men, because they are knaves, both cruel and ungrateful. To them I owe all my misfortunes."

"So much the better. To them I owe all my happiness."

"What happiness?"

"Feeling their yet breathing flesh quiver as I tear it with my teeth, their warm blood soothing my parched throat; the pleasure of crushing living beings against the corners of rocks, and hearing the cries of the victims mingled with the sounds of their bones smashing. Those are the pleasures which men have given me."

Schumacher stepped back terrified at the monster towards whom he had approached with such pride, thinking that there was something in common between them. Ashamed, he now buried his face in his hands, crying with indignation, not against the human race, but against himself. His noble heart felt ashamed of the hatred he had felt towards men, when he saw it reflected in such a man as Han of Iceland.

"Well," said the monster, laughing, "mankind's enemy, do you dare to boast of being like me?"

The old man shuddered.

"Oh God! rather than hate them as you do, I prefer to love them."

The guards came forward to take the monster into a cell far more secure.

Schumacher, left alone in the dungeon, was lost in thought, but he was no longer mankind's bitter enemy.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE TABLES TURNED.

THE guards were doubled in Munkholm Castle. Sentinels were on duty before every door. The tumult in the town was so great that the noise was heard even in the gloomy fortress, itself the scene of great excitement. The drums, muffled in crape, were

beating, the cannon from the tower sent forth its sounds at intervals, the heavy dungeon bell tolled with deep and prolonged tones. From everywhere boats came towards the formidable rock heavily laden with passengers. The crowd kept on increasing round the scaffold, draped in black, which was erected on the parade and surrounded by soldiers. Walking on the scaffold was a man in red serge; sometimes he stopped and leant on the axe he was carrying, shook the block on the ghastly platform, to ascertain if it were firm. A stack of wood had been prepared, in front of which torches burned, and between the scaffold and the stack they had fixed a stake, from which hung a board with these words—*Ordener Guldenlew, traitor*. A large black flag was waving from the top of the dungeon of Slcswig.

Just at this moment Ordener appeared in court, the bishop alone being absent, as his office for the defence was over.

The viceroy's son was in black, wearing the collar of Dannebrog. His face was pale, but proud looking. He was alone, for the chaplain, Athanasius Munder, had not returned when he was summoned. Although prepared for the sacrifice, still Ordener could not help thinking rather bitterly of life, and Ethel's husband would have chosen a far different ending than the grave, on the very day on which he had been united to his love.

He had prayed, and above all dreamed in his prison, and now that he would so shortly be beyond all prayers and dreams, he trusted in the strength which God and love both give.

The crowd, wrapt in deep attention, watched the condemned man, more moved than he was. His rank and his horrible fate awakened both feelings of envy and pity. All grieved at his punishment, though knowing the crime he was guilty of. In men there

is a strange feeling which impels them to seek pleasure in the fearful sight of suffering. They eagerly watch the features of the one so soon to die, that they may read his thoughts, as though some revelation from heaven or hell were about to appear in the eyes of the wretched man, or that death would cast its shadow over his head—in fact, to see how a man can look when hope has fled.

This being, full of strength and health, who breathes, who lives, yet in a moment, in the midst of others living like himself, will cease to move, to breathe, to live. To them he has done nothing, they pity him, yet none will help him, the unfortunate wretch, dead without dying, struck off at a blow. This life which society cannot give, yet takes, in all its pomp of judicial murder, all this inflames the imagination. And it is a strange and grievous sight to watch the unfortunate man who knows when his hour is nigh.

Previous to mounting the scaffold, Ordener was ordered into court, that he might be deprived of his honours and his rank. The whole assembly had calmed down, and watched the president as he ordered the condemned man to bend one knee on the ground, recommending silence to be maintained. The president opened the book relating to the knights of Dannebrog, and read the following words aloud clearly:

“Christiern, by the, grace and mercy of the Almighty, King of Denmark and Norway, the Vandals, and the Goths, Duke of Sleswig, of Holstein, of Stormarie and of Dytmarse, Count of Oldenbourg and of Delmephurst, having re-established, at the proposition of our high chancellor, Count of Griffenfeld” (here the president spoke so rapidly that the name was scarcely heard) “the royal order of Dannebrog, founded by our

illustrious ancestor, Saint Waldemar. This ancient order was created in memory of the Dannebrog standard, which was sent from heaven to our blessed kingdom. It would be forswearing the divine institution of the order if one of its knights could, with impunity, forfeit the honour and the holy laws of Church and State. Kneeling before God, we order that any knight of the order, who has given his soul to the devil by felony or treachery, after being publicly censured by a judge, shall be for ever degraded from the rank of knight of our royal order of Dannebrog." Here the president closed the book. "Ordener Guldenlew, Baron of Thorwick, Knight of Dannebrog, you have been guilty of high treason, a crime for which your head will be severed, your body burnt, and your ashes thrown to the winds. Ordener Guldenlew, traitor, you are unworthy to rank amidst the Knights of Dannebrog. Humble yourself, for I am going publicly to degrade you in the name of the king."

Placing his hand on the book, he was about to pronounce the fatal formula on Ordener, who still remained calm and unmoved, when a side door opened to the right of the bench. An usher announced his reverence the Bishop of Drontheimhus. He hastily entered, followed by another priest, who supported him.

"Stop, milord president!" cried he, with a force beyond his years, "stop! May Heaven be praised! I have come in time."

The assembly listened with renewed attention, foreseeing some fresh event. The president angrily turned on the bishop:

"Your reverence must allow me to observe that your presence here is useless. The condemned man is about to be degraded, and his last moment is at hand."

"Beware of touching him who is guiltless in the eyes of God. This condemned man is innocent!"

The cry of astonishment that ran through the audience could not be surpassed, except by the terrified cry from the president and clerk of the court.

"Yes, tremble, judges," continued the bishop, before the president could recover himself, "tremble, for you were about to shed innocent blood."

Ordener was in consternation lest his generous plan had been discovered, and the proofs against Schumacher established.

"Milord bishop, if this criminal affair passes from hand to hand it will escape us altogether," said the president. "Do not trust to appearances, for if Ordener Guldenlew be innocent, who then is guilty?"

"Your grace shall soon know," replied the bishop, pointing towards an iron casket. "Noble lords, in giving your judgment you have been utterly in the dark; but light will dawn on you when you have seen the contents of that casket."

Ordener, the president and clerk of the court, appeared equally struck at the sight of the mysterious box.

"Noble judges, listen to me," continued the bishop. "At our palace to-day, just as we were resting from the fatigues of the night, and praying for these condemned men, this sealed box was placed in our hands. The keeper of the Spladgest had left it at our palace, saying that it doubtless contained some Satanic mystery, as he had found it on Benignus Spiagudry's sacrilegious body, taken dead out of the Lake of Sparbo."

Ordener listened with renewed attention.

The audience maintained strict silence. The president and the clerk of the court looked like criminals. All their audacity and cunning had left them. All power at times leaves the wicked.

"After blessing the casket," continued the bishop, "we broke the seal, which was stamped with the

Griffenfeld arms. We soon discovered a Satanical secret, of which you can soon judge, honoured lords. Give me all your attention, for it is a question of men's blood, and the Lord weighs every drop."

Opening the casket, he took a parchment with the following inscription :

"I, Blaxtham Cumbysum, doctor, about to die, entrust to Captain Dispolsen, of Copenhagen, the Count of Griffenfeld's agent, the following document, written entirely by Turiaf Musdœmon, Chancellor Count d'Ahlefeld's servant, so that the said captain may make what use he pleases with it. I pray to God to pardon all my crimes. Written at Copenhagen the 11th day of this month of January, 1699.

"CUMBYSULSUM."

The clerk of the court trembled convulsively. He tried to speak, but could not. The bishop handed the parchment to the pale and agitated president.

Spreading the parchment, he cried :

"What do I see here ?

"*Letter to the noble Count d'Ahlefeld, showing the means of ridding himself legally of Schumacher.*" I swear, reverend bishop—" and the parchment fell from his hands.

"Read, read, my lord ! I do not for a moment doubt your unworthy servant has made use of your name, as he did that of the unfortunate Schumacher. Only see what your hatred has brought on your unfortunate predecessor. One of the courtiers in your name plotted for his ruin, hoping doubtless to gain favour in your grace's eyes."

These words proved to the president that the bishop, who knew the contents of the box, did not suspect

him. Ordener also breathed more freely, as he could now see that Schumacher's innocence would be at the same time proved with his own.

And he wondered what feeling had impelled him to seek the brigand for the iron casket, that his old guide carried with him; in fact, the very box he sought was following him.

He could not help dwelling on the strangeness of events. The fatal casket that had proved his ruin was now about to be the means of saving him.

The president having regained his presence of mind, with signs of the utmost indignation, shared by the audience, read a long letter, where Musdæmon explained the abominable plot he had carried out. Several times the clerk rose to defend himself, but the crowd would not listen to him. The president at length came to the end of the document, amidst general cries of horror.

"Halberdiers, seize that man," cried the president, pointing to the clerk of the court. The miserable wretch left his seat, to take one on the criminals' bench, amidst the howls of the populace.

"Your lordships," said the bishop, "tremble and rejoice at the same time. The facts you have just heard will now be verified by the chaplain of the prisons in this royal city, our honoured brother, Athanasius Munder, here present."

On a sign from the president, Athanasius Munder, bowing to the bishop and the court, thus expressed himself:

"What I am about to say is strictly the truth. May Heaven punish me if it is for aught but to act for the best. When this morning I saw the viceroy's son in his cell, I felt the young man was not guilty, although he had been condemned from his own confession. A few hours ago I was called to the unhappy moun-

taineer who was so cruelly assassinated before you, and condemned, honoured lords, as being Han of Iceland. These are the last words of the dying man, and which he begged me to repeat before the court as I gave him the last blessing, and these are the words:

“I am not Han of Iceland. I have been well punished for taking the name. He who paid me for doing so is the clerk of the court of chancery, called Musdæmon. He schemed the whole of the insurrection under the name of Hacket. He alone is guilty of all.”

“God is my witness for the truth of this,” said the priest. “May I save the innocent and only punish the guilty,” and he ceased, bowing to the bishop and the judges.

“Your grace can now see that one of my clients was not far wrong when he saw the resemblance between Hacket and your clerk,” said the bishop.

“Turiaf Musdæmon,” said the president to the prisoner, “what have you to say in your defence?”

Musdæmon, giving his master a look which frightened him, replied with assurance, after a moment’s silence:

“Nothing, milord.”

The president then continued, in an altered and faint voice:

“You then confess yourself guilty of the crime imputed to you? You are, then, the author of a conspiracy against the state and an individual named Schumacher?”

“Yes, milord.”

The bishop here rose:

“Milord president, so that no doubt may remain in this affair, ask the accused if he had any accomplices.”

“Accomplices!” repeated Musdæmon.

He reflected for a moment.

“No, milord-bishop,” said he at last.

The president, who had been anxiously awaiting the reply, now looked towards him, greatly relieved.

“No, I never had any accomplices,” repeated Musdæmon, more forcibly. “I plotted the whole thing from attachment to my master, who was entirely ignorant of the fact, hoping to ruin his enemy, Schumacher.”

The eyes of the accused and the president here met.

“Your grace must then feel,” said the bishop, “that Ordener Guldenlew cannot be guilty, since Musdæmon says he had no accomplices.”

“Why did he plead guilty, reverend bishop, if he were not so?”

“Milord president, why did that mountaineer, at the peril of his life, persist in calling himself Han of Iceland? God alone knows the secret of every heart.”

“Your lordships,” said Ordener, “now that the real culprit is discovered, I can now tell you that I falsely accused myself to save the ex-chancellor Schumacher, whose death would have left his daughter without a protector.”

The president bit his lips.

“We request the court,” said the bishop, “to proclaim our client Ordener’s innocence.”

The president replied by a sign in the affirmative.

At the syndic’s request the examination of the casket was continued, but nothing else was found but Schumacher’s title deeds, a certificate, and some letters from the Munkholm prisoner to Captain Dispolgen—letters full of bitterness, but in no way culpable, and which could alarm no one but Chancellor d’Ahlefeld.

While the crowd was waiting impatiently on the parade for the condemned man, and the executioner walked carelessly up and down the scaffold, the judges had retired to deliberate, but shortly after returned.

The president, in a faint voice, pronounced the sentence of death on Turiaf Musdœmon, and re-established Ordener Guldenlew's position, with all his honours, titles and privileges.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A WEIRD TRANSACTION.

ALL the Musketeers of Munkholm were now in barracks, situated in a large, square yard, in the heart of the fortress. At night all doors were barricaded, and the soldiers slept, except the sentinels, who were dispersed about the towers, and the guards before the military prison.

This prison, the strongest and best guarded one of Munkholm, enclosed the two condemned men, who were to be hanged in the morning—Han of Iceland and Musdœmon.

Han of Iceland was alone in his cell. He was lying in chains on the ground, his head resting on a stone. A faint light came through an iron grating in the oaken door which separated his cell from the adjoining room, whence he could hear his keepers swearing and laughing, to the sound of empty bottles and the rattling of dice on drums.

The monster silently bit his chains, stretched his arms to and fro, glanced around, and at length called out. The gaoler came to the grating.

"What do you want?" said he to the brigand.

“Companion,” said Han of Iceland, raising himself, “I am cold, my stone bed is hard and damp. Give me a bundle of straw to lie on, and a little fire, that I may warm myself.”

“After all,” said the gaoler, “it is but right that a poor devil who is going to be hanged should have his comforts—even the Devil of Iceland. I will bring you what you have asked for. Have you money?”

“No,” replied the brigand.

“What, you! the most famous robber in Norway, have not some wicked golden ducats in your money bag?”

“No,” replied the brigand.

“A few royal crowns?”

“No, I tell you!”

“Not even some miserable ascalins?”

“No, no, nothing; not even enough to buy a rat’s skin or a man’s soul?”

The gaoler tossed his head.

“That is different, then. You ought not to complain. Your cell is not so cold as the one you will sleep in to-morrow, nor will you then notice the hardness of your bed.”

The gaoler retired amidst the monster’s curses, who continued to roll in his chains, the sound of which became fainter, as though the brigand’s violent movements had broken some of the links.

The oak door opened, and a tall man, in red serge, entered, carrying a dark lantern. He was accompanied by the gaoler who had refused the prisoner’s request. Han now remained perfectly quiet.

“Han of Iceland,” said the man in red, “I am Nichol Orugix, executioner of the Drontheimhuus. To-morrow, at the break of day, I am to have the honour of hanging your excellency by the neck to a new gibbet in the square at Drontheim.”

"Are you sure you will hang me?" replied the brigand.

The executioner laughed.

"I wish you were as sure of Jacob's Ladder to Heaven as you are sure of mounting the gibbet with Nichol Orugix's ladder."

"Indeed!" said the monster, looking maliciously.

"I repeat, milord brigand, that I am the executioner of the province."

"If I were not myself, I should like to be you," replied he.

"I would not say as much to you," said the executioner, rubbing his hands, proud and flattered. "You are right, my friend. Ours is a noble profession. Ah, how well I know the weight of a man's head!"

"Have you ever drank blood?" asked the brigand.

"No, but I have often caused it to flow."

"Have you ever devoured the entrails of a living infant?"

"No, but I have made bones smash between the planks of the boot, I have wrenched limbs away on a wheel, I have notched steel saws on the skulls of many a man, I have tortured flesh yet breathing, with red-hot pincers, I have burnt blood in the open veins by pouring in molten lead or boiling oil!"

"Yes," said the brigand pensively, "you also have had your pleasures."

"Although you are Han of Iceland, I have caused more souls to fly than you have, without counting yours to-morrow."

"Supposing I have one. Executioner of the Drontheimhuus, do you think you can send off Ingulphus' soul now in Han of Iceland's body without him taking yours?"

The executioner shouted with laughter.

"Really? Ah, we shall see to-morrow!"

"We shall see," said the brigand.

"I have not come here to talk about your soul," said the executioner, "but only about your body. Listen to me. After your death your corpse belongs to me, but the law allows you to sell it to me. Now, what do you want?"

"What do I want for my own corpse?" said the brigand.

"Yes, and be conscientious."

Han of Iceland, turning to the gaoler, said:

"Tell me, comrade, what you will charge for a bundle of straw and a little fire?"

The gaoler considered a moment, and said:

"Two golden ducats."

"Well," said the brigand to the executioner, "you must give me two golden ducats for my corpse."

"Two golden ducats?" cried the executioner. "That is dreadfully dear. Two golden ducats for a vile corpse? No, indeed. I will not give that price."

"Then you will not have it," calmly replied the monster.

"You will be thrown in the common sewer, instead of ornamenting the Royal Museum at Copenhagen, or the collection of curiosities at Bergen."

"What do I care?"

"Long after your death people will come to look at your skeleton, saying: '*These are the remains of the famous Han of Iceland!*' Your bones will be well polished, and kept together with copper pins. You will be put in a glass case, well dusted every day. Instead of all these honours, only think what awaits you, if you do not sell me your corpse. You will be left to rot in some charnel house, food for worms and a prey for vultures."

"Well, then I shall only be like the living, who are

constantly bitten by small creatures, and devoured by large ones."

"Two golden ducats!" muttered the executioner between his teeth. "What exorbitant terms, my dear Han of Iceland! If you do not lower your price, we can do no business together."

"It is probably the first and the last sale I shall ever effect in my life, so I am anxious to make a good bargain."

"Remember, I can make you repent your obstinacy, for to-morrow you will be in my power."

"You think so?"

The executioner did not notice the tone in which these words were said.

"Yes, there is a way of fixing the slip-knot; whereas if you will listen to reason, well, I will hang you in a better way."

"What do I care what you do with my neck to-morrow?" replied the monster jeeringly.

"Now won't two royal crowns satisfy you? What will you do with them?"

"Address yourself to your comrade there," said the brigand, pointing to the jailor. "He asks me two golden ducats for a bundle of straw and some fire."

Addressing the jailor, the executioner said angrily:

"By St. Joseph's saw, it is shocking to charge two ducats for fire and some vile straw. Why—its weight in gold."

The jailor replied:

"I might have asked four. It is you, Master Nichol, who is a regular screw. Fancy refusing the poor prisoner two golden ducats for his corpse, which you sell for at least twenty to some scholar or some doctor."

"I never paid more than fifteen ascalins," said the executioner.

"Yes, for the body of a paltry thief, or a wretched Jew, very likely; but every one knows you can ask your own price for Han of Iceland's body."

Han of Iceland tossed his head.

"What business is it of yours?" said Orugix, roughly. "Do I interfere with your robberies? The clothes, the jewels that you rob the prisoners of? The dirty water you put into their poor soup? The way you torture them to extract money from them? No, I will not give two golden ducats."

"No straw and no fire for less than two golden ducats," obstinately replied the jailor.

"No corpse for less than two golden ducats," calmly repeated the brigand.

Stamping on the ground, the executioner cried after a moment's silence:

"Let me be off; time flies, and I am wanted elsewhere;" and taking out a leather purse, he slowly opened it. "There, you cursed devil of Iceland," said he regretfully, "there are your two ducats. Satan won't give as much for your soul as I am giving for your body."

The brigand received the two golden pieces.

The jailor at once put out his hand to take them.

"One moment, companion, first give me what I asked for."

The jailor went out, and soon returned with a bundle of fresh straw, and a brazier filled with red-hot coal, which he put down near the condemned man.

"That is all right," said the brigand, giving up the two ducats. "I shall warm myself to-night. Just another word; isn't this cell close to the musketeers of Munckholm's barracks?"

"That is true," replied the jailor.

"Which way is the wind?"

"In the east, I think."

"All right," said the brigand.

"What are you driving at, comrade?" asked the jailor.

"Nothing."

"Adieu, comrade, till early to-morrow."

"Yes, till to-morrow," replied the brigand.

The closing of the heavy door prevented the executioner and his companion from hearing the wild and jeering laughter which followed these words.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE HANGMAN'S BROTHER.

LET us now glance at the other cell, against the Musketeers' Barracks, where Turiaf Musdœmon was imprisoned. The reader was doubtless astonished to find this Musdœmon, with his cunning and cowardice, confess so readily the secret of his crime to the court which condemned him, and hide so generously the part his ungrateful master, Chancellor d'Ahlefeld, had taken. Reader, rest assured Musdœmon was in no way changed. This generosity only proved his wonderful ability. When he first heard his infernal plot had been discovered, he was for a moment dazed and terrified. This soon passed, and he at once saw that it was useless to try to ruin his victims, he must now only think of saving himself. He thought of two ways. To throw all on to Count d'Ahlefeld's shoulders, as he had in so cowardly a manner forsaken him, or take all the crime he had shared with the count, on himself. An inferior mind would have chosen the first. Musdœmon decided on the second. The chancellor was the chancellor, and there was nothing compromising to him in

the documents, though to the clerk they were overwhelming; besides, looks had passed between the president and himself which determined him, feeling sure Count d'Ahlefeld would favour his escape, not in gratitude for passed services, but wanting further services in the future.

He paced his faintly lighted cell, quite expecting that night he would be free. He examined this old stone cell, constructed by ancient kings, whose names were almost forgotten, and was rather astonished to find himself walking on a wooden flooring, which sounded as though it were over a cavity. He noticed a large iron ring fixed under the arch, from which hung the remains of some rope. Time passed, and he listened impatiently to the dungeon clock slowly striking the hours and to its dismal tolling during the silence of the night. At last he heard footsteps outside his cell, and full of hope he watched the door open, with a beaming countenance.

The same person in scarlet that we have seen in Han's cell entered. He carried a coil of rope, and he was followed by four halberdiers dressed in black, and armed with swords and halberds. Musdæmon was still in his legal wig and gown. This costume seemed to strike the man in red. Being in the habit of respecting it, he bowed.

"M ilord," said he to the prisoner, hesitatingly; "is it with you that we have to do business?"

"Yes, yes," replied eagerly Musdæmon, hoping from this polite address that his release was at hand, as he had not noticed the colour of his visitor's clothes.

The man, fixing his eyes on the parchment before him, then said:

"Is your name Turiaf Musdæmon?"

"Exactly so. You have come from the high chancellor?"

"Yes, your worship."

"Do not forget to express my gratitude to his grace, after you have carried out your orders."

The man in scarlet looked astonished.

"Your—gratitude?"

"Yes, my friends, for at present I shall not be able to do so myself."

"Probably not," replied the executioner.

"You can understand that I must not shew myself ungrateful for such a service."

"By the cross of the great thief," cried the other, laughing loudly, "one would think the chaneellor was doing quite a favour for your worship."

"Doubtless he is only rendering me strict justice."

"Strict justice; but you allow it is strict justice. It is the first time in twenty-six years that I have heard such an avowal. Now, milord, we are wasting time in words; are you ready?"

"I am," said Musdæmon, gleefully going towards the door.

"Here, wait a moment," said the man in scarlet, dropping his coil of rope.

Musdæmon stopped, saying:

"What is that rope for?"

"Your worship is right to ask me the question, for I have too much rope with me, but I thought more prisoners would be condemned," he said, uncoiling the rope.

"Now, be quick," said Musdæmon.

"Your worship is in a great hurry; do you not wish to say a prayer?"

"No other than the one I have already said, to give my thanks to his grace. For God's sake don't be long," added Musdæmon, "I am anxious to leave here. Have we far to go?"

"Far to go?" repeated the man in scarlet, taking

his measurement of the cord; "the route we shall take will not fatigue your worship, for we shall go no further than here."

Musdæmon shuddered, saying:

"What do you mean?"

"What is your meaning?" said the other.

"Oh, God!" said Musdæmon, horror-struck. "Who are you?"

"The hangman."

The poor wretch trembled like a dry leaf in the wind. "Have you not come to further my escape?"

The executioner laughing, said:

"Yes, to help you to escape into spirit-land, whence no one will ever take you."

Throwing himself down, the prisoner cried:

"Pardon, have pity on me—pardon!"

"This is the first time I have had such a request made to me," said the man, coldly. "Do you take me for the king?"

The wretched man, lately so joyful, was now crawling in the dust and striking his head on the ground, crying and sobbing; he kissed the executioner's feet.

"Peace, enough of that," said the man, with a kick. "I never before saw the black gown humble itself before my scarlet dress. Comrade, pray to God and the Saints, they will heed you more than I shall."

Musdæmon remained kneeling, his head buried in his hands, crying bitterly.

By raising himself on tip-toe the executioner had succeeded in running the rope through the ring under the arch. Making it firm with a double twist, he prepared a slip-knot at the end which touched the ground.

"I have finished," said he, to the condemned man; "have you also ended with life?"

"No," said Musdæmon, rising; "this cannot be.

This is some fearful mistake; Chancellor d'Ahlefeld cannot be so vile. You cannot have been sent for me. Let me escape, or fear the chancellor's anger."

"Did you not say that you were Turiaf Musdæmon?" replied the executioner.

The prisoner was silent, then suddenly said:

"No, I am not called Musdæmon; my name is Turiaf Orugix."

"Orugix!" said the executioner. "Orugix!" and tearing the wig off which hid the man's face, he cried: "My brother!"

"Your brother?" said the prisoner joyfully, yet with a little shame mingled with his astonishment. "Are you—?"

"Nychol Orugix, executioner of the Drontheimhuns, at your service, my brother Turiaf."

The condemned man threw his arms round the executioner, calling him *his brother, his dear brother*. A witness to the scene would certainly have been touched by such a show of brotherly love. Turiaf used every art of pleasing towards his brother, but the smile was timid, and only put on. Something like a tiger flattering an elephant when the monster's foot is on his body, and about to crush him. Nychol looked gloomy and embarrassed.

"This is fortunate, brother Nychol. I am delighted to see you again."

"And I am sorry for you, brother Turiaf."

"The prisoner pretended not to hear, and continued in a trembling voice:

"You have doubtless a wife and children. You must take me to see my charming sister, and let me embrace my nephews."

"By the Devil's cross!" muttered the executioner.

"I will be a second father to them. Listen, brother. I have power; I have influence."

The *brother* answered in a forbidding manner:

"I know you had, only now, think of that the saints have in store for you."

"Oh, God! what does this mean, dear Nychol? I am saved, since I have found you!" said he, but looking at the same time hopeless. "Remember, we are sons of the same mother. In infancy we shared the same toys, and Nychol, you are my brother."

"You never remembered it until now," replied Nychol savagely.

"No, I cannot die by my brother's hand."

"It is your own fault, Turiaf. You stopped my career by preventing me from being the royal executioner at Copenhagen, and sent me to be but a provincial executioner, in this wretched country. If you had not acted thus, you would not have had to complain of conduct which now disgusts you. I should not have been in the Drontheimhuus; another would have performed the office. We have said enough; you must die."

Death to the wicked is frightful, to the good it is but rest—both leave this mortal flesh. The just man leaves but his earthly prison; the wicked one, dragged from a fortress, and hell reveals itself to the soul which had thought to end in nothingness, and when it knocks at death's door, there is no void the other side. The prisoner wrung his hands with heartrending cries, more fearful than the eternal lament of the damned.

"Merciful God! Saints of Heaven, if there are any, have compassion on me. Nychol, Nychol! in the name of our mother, oh, pray let me live!"

"I cannot. The order is peremptory," said the executioner, showing the parchment.

"This order does not concern me," said the prisoner despairingly, "it relates to a certain Musdœmon, and I am Turiaf Orugix."

"You are laughing at me," said Nychol, shrugging his shoulders. "I know it concerns you. Yesterday you would not have been Turiaf Orugix to your brother, and to-day you are to him Turiaf Musdæmon."

"Brother, brother!" repeated the wretched creature. "Wait till to-morrow. The high chancellor cannot have given the order for my death! It is a fearful mistake. Count d'Ahlefeld cares for me. I implore you, my dear Nychol, to spare me. I shall soon be in favour again, and I will amply repay you."

"You can only do one thing, Turiaf," interrupted the executioner. "I have already lost two executions on which I reckoned; the ex-chancellor Schumacher and the viceroy's son. I am always unfortunate. I now only have Han of Iceland and you. Your execution being secret, and at night, will bring me in twelve golden ducats. I ask you but one favour. Let me finish all quietly."

"Oh, God!" cried the condemned man painfully.

"Really, it is the first and the last service, but in return I promise you shall not suffer. As a brother I will hang you, so resign yourself."

Musdæmon rose in great anger. His lips were blue and trembling; his teeth chattered, and he was foaming at the mouth.

"By Satan, I would have saved this d'Ahlefeld. I would have embraced my brother, and they kill me; and I must die—at night, in a dark cell—without making my curses resound from one end of the kingdom to the other, without unveiling all their crimes. Was it for such a death as this, that I sullied all my life? Wretch," said he, addressing his brother, "you wish then to be a fratricide?"

"I am executioner," coolly replied Nychol.

"No," said he, throwing himself with fury on the executioner, with flaming eyes like a bull at bay

"No, I will not die thus. I have not lived like a venomous serpent now to be crushed like a worm. I will have a last bite, but it shall be a deadly one."

So speaking, he grappled in deadly strife the one he had so lately embraced as a brother.

The flattering and caressing Musdœmon shewed himself in his true colours. He had felt the very depths of despair, and after crawling like a snake he became a tiger. While the brothers were thus struggling, it was difficult to say which was the most frightful. The one fought like a wild beast, the other with the fury of a devil.

The four halberdiers did not long remain inactive, and Musdœmon was soon obliged to give way. He threw himself against the wall with smothered cries, digging his nails in the stones:

"Die! Devils of hell! Die, without my cries being heard through these vaults—without trying to pierce these walls!"

He was seized and offered no resistance, as he was utterly exhausted. To bind him, his gown was taken off. In doing so, a sealed paper fell to the ground.

"How could I have forgotten that?" muttered he, with a devilish expression. "Listen, brother Nychol," said he, in rather a friendly voice. "Those papers belong to the high chancellor. Promise me to deliver them to him, and then do what you like with me."

"Now that you are quiet, I promise to fulfil your last wishes, although you have just acted in so unbrotherly a way. Those papers shall be given to the chancellor, on Orugix's honour."

"Deliver them yourself," said the condemned man, smiling strangely, but as smiles were not much in the executioner's way, he did not understand them. "You will, perhaps, obtain some favour from his grace for the pleasure they will give him."

"Indeed, brother," said Orugix, "perhaps I shall be raised to royal executioner. Well, let us part friends. I will forgive your scratches this time, and forgive me the rope collar I am about to bestow on you."

The chancellor had promised me another collar," replied Musdæmon.

The halberdiers led him to the centre of the cell. The executioner passed the fatal noose round his neck.

"Turiaf, are you ready?"

"One minute — one minute more!" said the condemned man, to whom all his fears had returned, "have mercy, my brother, and do not pull the rope until I tell you."

"I shall not want to pull the rope," replied the executioner.

Again he repeated the question:

"Are you ready?"

"Another minute! Alas! then I must die."

"Turiaf, I have not the time to wait." While speaking he signed to the halberdiers to draw back.

"One more word, brother. Do not forget to deliver the packet to Count d'Ahlefeld."

"Be easy," and for the third time he said: "Now are you ready?"

The unfortunate wretch was again about to speak, doubtless to implore another moment of life, when the executioner stooped and pressed a brass button on the floor. The planks gave way, and the wretched creature fell into a square trap beneath, amidst the vibrations of the rope, so suddenly stretched, which swayed with the convulsions of the dying man.

In the gloomy pit, nothing but the rope was seen, but sounds were heard like running water and a strong wind blowing. The halberdiers drew back horrified. The executioner, seizing the cord to steady it, let

himself down, and rested both his feet on the victim's shoulders. The fatal rope, thus stretched, gave a hoarse twang, and then remained quite still.

A smothered sigh was heard from the trap.

"That is all right," said the executioner, ascending into the cell again. "Adieu, brother!"

Taking a long knife from his belt, he added :

"Go to feed the fish in the Gulf! Let your body be given to water as your soul will be to fire!"

With these words he cut the rope, what remained attached to the ring flew back to the roof, and a sullen splash was heard as the body fell into the water, which bore it away to the Gulf.

Just after the executioner had closed the trap, he saw that the cell was full of smoke.

"Where does this smoke come from?" asked he of the halberdiers.

They could not tell. In surprise, they opened the door of the cell. All the passages were equally filled with a heavy, stifling cloud. Alarmed, they made their way through a secret passage to the courtyard, where a fearful sight met their eyes.

The whole of the military prison and barracks of the musketeers were on fire. The flames burst out through the walls and over the roofs, rushing from all the windows, whilst the dark towers of Munkholm stood out in relief by the lurid light, or were lost in thick clouds of smoke. A turnkey, who was running across the yard told them, while Han of Iceland's keepers were sleeping, the monster's cell caught fire, as they had imprudently given him straw and fuel.

"I am indeed unfortunate," cried Orugix. "Now Han will escape me. The wretch has been burnt, and I shall not even have his body, that I have paid two guineas for."

The unfortunate musketeers, seeing death before

them, hastened in crowds to the heavy portal so firmly barricaded. From without could be heard their cries of distress and anguish. Some were at the windows wringing their hands, others cast themselves into the yard, meeting one death to avoid the other. The whole edifice was in flames before the rest of the garrison could arrive. All help was vain. Fortunately the building was isolated. When the great door was at length burst open it was too late, for just then the roof fell in on the unfortunate soldiers, bringing down in its fall the whole of the walls of the burning building. Nothing now could be seen. But, from the midst of the fierce flames could still be heard some faint cries. Some blackened fragments of the walls were all that remained. When search could be made amongst the ruins, under stone and beams were found calcined bones and disfigured corpses. And about thirty soldiers, mostly injured, were all that remained of the fine Munkholm regiment.

On going to the fatal cell that Han had occupied, the remains of a body, with fetters on wrist and ankle, were found near the fire. Amongst the ashes there were two skulls, but only one corpse.

CHAPTER XLV.

RETRIBUTION.

COUNT D'AHLEFELD, pale and worn out, was walking up and down his room, his hands were crumpling up a packet of letters he had just been reading, and stamping the ground with rage.

At the other end of the room stood Nyehol respectfully, still in scarlet, and holding his hat in his hand.

"You have rendered me a service, Musdemon," muttered he between his teeth.

The executioner, staring stupidly, said: "Your grace is then pleased?"

"What do you want?" said the chancellor roughly.

The executioner, delighted to have attracted the chancellor's attention, smiled hopefully:

"What I want, your grace, is the place of executioner at Copenhagen, if your grace will deign to confer it upon me, in consideration of the good news of which I am bearer."

The chancellor called the two halberdiers on guard at the door. "Seize that scoundrel, who has had the insolence to defy me."

"My lord!" cried Nychol, thunderstruck, as the guards led him away.

"You are no longer executioner of the Drontheimhuus. I cancel your appointment," said the chancellor, slamming the door.

The chancellor read and re-read these letters, which proved how he was dishonoured. They were the countess's letters to Musdæmon. They were in Elphège's handwriting. He now saw that Ulrica was not his daughter, that Frederic, so much regretted, was perhaps not his son. The unfortunate count's pride has been his punishment, and has been the cause of all his crimes. Not only have his plans of vengeance been entirely frustrated, his ambitious dreams vanished, his past dishonoured, but his future lost also. He wished to ruin his enemies. He has lost his reputation, his adviser, and even his rights as husband and father. Yet he will once again see the wretched creature who has betrayed him. Carrying the letters in his hand, with rapid steps he passed through the spacious rooms until he arrived at Elphège's door. Furiously he entered. His guilty wife had suddenly heard from Colonel Vœthain of her son Frederic's fearful death. The wretched woman was mad.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AFTER CLOUD, SUNSHINE.

FOR a fortnight the inhabitants of Drontheim and the Drontheimhuus did nothing but talk of the events just related.

The populace now despaired of the pleasure of witnessing seven successive executions. Old, half-blind women related, how on the night of the fire, they had seen Han of Iceland fly away in a flame, laughing at the fire and sending the burning roof on the Munkholm musketeers.

After an absence, which to Ethel had been so long, Ordener appeared at the Tower of the Lion of Sleswig, accompanied by Levin de Knud, and the chaplain, Athanasius Munder.

Schumacher was in the garden, leaning on his daughter.

Anxious as the young married couple were to throw themselves into each other's arms, they had to be contented with a look. Schumacher pressed the young man's hands affectionately, and bowed kindly to the two strangers.

"Young man," said the old captive, "may heaven bless your return!"

"Milord," replied Ordener, "I have seen my father at Bergen—I have come to embrace my father at Drontheim."

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished old man.

"For you to give me your daughter, noble lord."

"My daughter?" cried the prisoner, turning toward the flushed and trembling Ethel.

"Yes, milord, I love your Ethel. I will devote my life to her. She is mine."

"You are a noble and worthy young man, my son. Though your father has injured me, I forgive him for your sake, and I would gladly sanction this union, but there is one obstacle."

"Which one?" said Ordener anxiously.

"You love my daughter, but are you sure she loves you?"

The two lovers looked at each other in surprise.

"Yes," continued the old man, "I regret it, for I like you, and I should wish to have called you son. But my daughter will not consent, for she has declared her aversion to you; when I spoke of you after your departure, she tried to turn the conversation, as though the subject annoyed her. Give up the idea, Ordener; we are cured of love as we are of hatred."

"Milord!" said Ordener, thunder-struck.

"Father," said Ethel, joining her hands together.

"My child," interrupted the old man, "this marriage would please me, but the idea displeases you. I will not wound your feelings. Ethel, since a fortnight ago my ideas have changed. I will not try to overcome your repugnance for Ordener. You are free to act.

Athanasius Munder smilingly answered:

"She is not so."

"You are mistaken, noble father," said Ethel, "I do not hate Ordener."

"How is that?" cried her father.

"I am——" replied Ethel.

She hesitated, and Ordener, kneeling before the old man, said:

"She is my wife, father. Pardon me, as my own father has already done, and bless your children."

Schumacher, much astonished, blessed the young couple before him.

"I have uttered too many curses in my life, without profit; I now take every occasion to give my blessing. But explain yourselves."

All was explained to him, and he wept with tears of gratitude and love.

"I thought myself wise; I am old, and I could not understand a young girl's heart."

"I am called then Ethel Guldenlew," said Ethel with childish delight.

"Orderer Guldenlew," replied old Schumacher, "you are better than I, for in the hour of my prosperity I should never have condescended to unite myself to the daughter of a degraded and wretched outlaw."

The general took the prisoner's hand and gave him a roll of parchment.

"Milord count, do not speak thus. Here are your title deeds, which the king had already sent you by Dispolsten. His majesty has now added both pardon and liberty. This is the Countess of Danneskiold's dowry, your daughter."

"Pardon! liberty!" said the delighted Ethel.

"Countess of Danneskiold!" repeated the old man.

"Yes, count," continued the general, "you take all your titles, all your property has been restored to you."

"To whom do I owe all this?" asked the happy Schumacher.

"To General Levin de Knud," replied Orderer.

"Levin de Knud? There, I told you, so, noble Governor, Levin de Knud is the best of men."

"But why did he not come to tell me the happy tidings? Where is he?"

Orderer pointing towards the general, who was smiling, yet tearfully: "There he is. There he is."

It was a touching scene to witness the meeting of these two old men, friends in youth and power.

On knowing Han of Iceland, Schumacher had ceased

to hate men; on knowing Levin and Ordener, he began to like them.

Grand *fêtes* were soon held in honour of the union made in the gloomy cell. Life now dawned with a smile on the young couple, who had smiled at death. Count d'Ablefeld's greatest punishment was in seeing them happy.

Athanasius Munder had his happiness also; the fourteen condemned men were pardoned, and Ordener obtained the same grace for old companions in misfortune, Kennybol, Jonas, and Norbite, who returned free and joyful, announcing to the now peaceful miners that the king had freed them from the obnoxious tax.

Schumacher did not long enjoy the pleasure of witnessing the happiness of his daughter Ethel with Ordener.

Liberty and good fortune were too much for him, he soon enjoyed another kind of happiness and freedom.

He died in the same year, 1699; grief overpowered his children, showing them that perfect happiness on earth is not to be found.

He was buried in Veer church in Jutland, belonging to his son-in-law, on his tomb were all the titles of which in his captivity he had been deprived. The future Counts of Danneskiold were descended from the union of Ordener with Ethel.

THE END.

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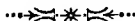
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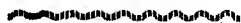
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